









PICYSTATION Official Azine - Austral Official azine - Australia

ISSUE 67 APRIL 2012

100% Australian Content

OF THE HOTTEST

REVIEWED!

ALNIN **GAIDEN 3**

A seguel on the cutting edge!

BORDERLANDS 2

Brand new bad-asses and 87 bazillion guns!

ULTIMATE REVEAL

SAS

We lift the hood of this truly revolutionary sequel!

RESIDENT EVIL 6 ASURA'S WRATH TWISTED METAL FAR CRY 3 **JOURNEY** I AM ALIVE SSX AND MORE!

FINAL VERDICT!

MASS EFFECT 3

BioWare takes aim at RPG perfection!

BANNED!

We review the game The Man doesn't want you to play!

REVVED UP!

OLLIPO

Why it's all sunshine and brain blows!





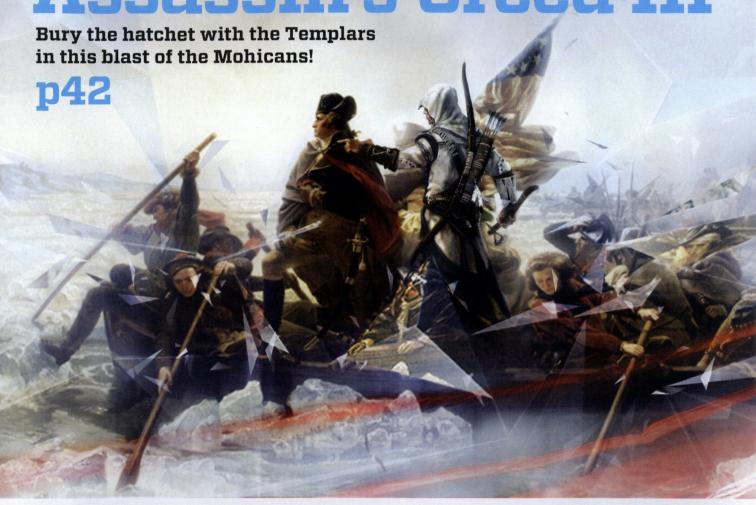




PlayStation ® Official Magazine - Australia

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INSIDER



OPINION

Multi-sharks

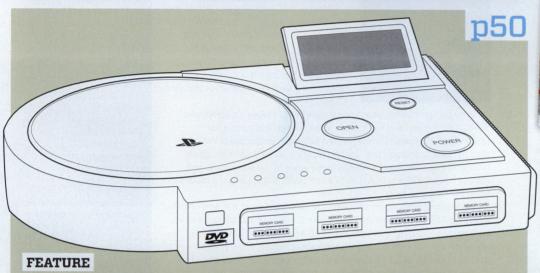
Gaming gadabout Naz Pattison offers his thoughts on modern multiplayer.



OPINION

Keep the faith

Uncharted. Smartphones. Nintendo. All these things are threads for the cloth woven by Angry Sackboy.



WHAT IF...

TAKE A TOUR WITH US THROUGH THE COBWEB-FILLED BASEMENT OF OUR OPS MUSEUM OF CANCELLED PLAYSTATION PROJECTS. ROLL ON UP TO THE FREAKSHOW! NO REFUNDS.

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WIN

Meet the team



Paul Taylor Deputy Editor

I've just come back after a holiday. Refreshed, sparkling, and ready to lose myself to Mass Effect 3. **Playing:** MotorStorm RC **Wanting:** RR Unbounded



Stephanie Goh

Art Director

Have been practising my spag-bol recipes. The office fridge is full of aborted attempts. Tuck in!

Playing: Skyrim Wanting: AC III



Naz Pattison

Acting Senior Writer

Loving being back on *OPS*. I've played more games this month than the last year combined. Best. Month. Ever.

Playing: | Am Alive Wanting: AC |||



James Cottee

The PS Vita launch party was ace. I just wish I could remember it. Apparently it

was on a boat. **Playing:** Wipeout 2048

Playing: Wipeout 2048
Wanting: Monster Hunter



James Ellis

Contributor

Wrestling with the big cosmic questions: buy 3G or WiFi? And, does coconut oil really makes you get darker faster?

Playing: FiFA Football Wanting: Mass Effect 3



Nathan Lawrence

Contributor

Gaming my way through a mountain of Vita titles. That platform's got game, yo! **Playing:** Golden Abyss

Wanting: Darksiders II



Dave Kozicki

Contributor

Due to my mouth and inflicting post-mortem damage I've also been refused classification **Playing:** *Syndicate*

Wanting: Borderlands 2



Toby McCasker

Contributor

Wandered into EB and was blasted by anime fun bags: bought Record of Agarest. **Playing:** Record of Agarest War Zero

Wanting: Mass Effect 3



Angry Sackboy Contributor

Just saved the galaxy like a bawsss. Refusing to go online to get the 'bestest'

ending. Screw that noise. **Playing:** Mass Effect 3 **Wanting:** Mass Effect 4

Editorial



just rewound 25 years worth of gaming in my head, and every criticism I had about modern gaming sounds like a first world problem.

Why are PS3 install times getting me down? I once owned a four disk Amiga 500 copy of *Street Fighter II* that took three freakin' hours just to get to M. Bison. Two-and-a-half of those hours were spent swapping floppies. Capcom taught me a degree of patience that I've somehow lost.

Why do I go mental about online griefers? I played *Duke Nukem 3D* against a mate and we happily spawn-killed each other for upwards of 20 times in a row (depending on ammo supply). We were also genuinely amazed that we could play a game six streets apart. Nowadays we call "hax" if we die three times in the same way, and roll our eyes if a friend in Antarctica can't connect to us and a mate in Moscow for some *Borderlands* action.

How come graphics in shooters are so important to me now? Not so long ago *Medal of Honor* on PSX blew my mind. Those amazing levels had *lighting*, scripted *explosions* (!!) and an amazing *15 metre draw distance*. If a polygon is out of place today people treat the experience like it's throw-away ruined, like a Mercedes with a squeaky glovebox.

Obviously, times change and we changed with them – as a critic I had to. Even still, every once in a while I get to thinking (read: drinkin') and wonder what it'd be like to show my 10-year-old self Skyrim.

It would be like feeding a caveman a bowl of sherbet...

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Sdam.

Adam Mathew

Editor

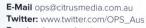
Playing: Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim **Wanting:** A bowl of sherbet

SPEAK WITH US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:



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TURN TO PAGE 40

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20 ELITE COPS 1 RUTHLESS CRIME LORD **30 FLOORS OF MAYHEM**

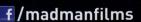


CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON MARCH 22



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and the Art of Network Maintenance

A rose by any other name?

here was vague panic this month as Sony announced it would be renaming the PlayStation Network to Sony Entertainment Network (see new logo on the opposite page). Conspiracy nuts were unprepared for the news and, without their tin-foil hats, began to see corporate monsters under their bed. Happily, these creatures disappeared

when the lights were turned on and once people realised this was part of a long-term realignment on Sony's part they managed to calm down.

The realignment started back in 2009, when then CEO and President of Sony Corporation, Howard Stringer began his succession plan. Grooming four senior executives – his so-called Four



Musketeers – he focused special attention on Kazuo Hirai. A 27-year veteran with the company, Hirai was the man responsible for slashing PS3 production costs and steering the console on the long path to profitability. When a new, integrated division combining cameras, TVs and other consumer products was formed, Hirai was the obvious choice to head it up. Now, he's taken the mantle from Stringer as President and CEO.

The recent renaming of the PlayStation Network to Sony Entertainment Network is part of this long-term strategy that has brought the entertainment space under one roof at Sony City in Shinagawa, Japan. The firmware update at the beginning of February introduced the change to PS3 and Vita users, while the PSP judo-rolled its way under the changes. It will be retaining PSN for the time being, but Sony hasn't ruled out an eventual move across to SEN for the ageing handheld.

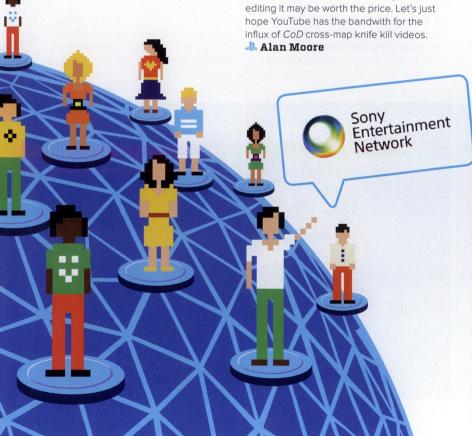
The move aligns video-game content with the other components of the SEN, including Music Unlimited, the awkwardlynamed "Video Store of PlayStation Store" and PlayMemories Online (previously known as Personal Space). Sony says the name change will get the company closer to its goal of "establishing a global comprehensive network platform

of services across games, movies, music and more, all accessible from one convenient account." Increasing the overall convenience level by a factor of six is the fact that the name change requires very little effort on our parts. Beyond a firmware update, there's not much else for end users to do, other than browse the new T&Cs. Usernames and passwords will remain the same, although separate services such as Quickflix will still require their own logins.

While the services provided by Music Unlimited (previously Qriocity) and Video Unlimited are nothing new, it's worth expanding on PlayMemories. If you're unfamiliar with the service, we suggest stopping past the website [www. playmemoriesonline.com] if only to watch the trailer introducing the service. It's a little odd, frankly, and has the unmistakable air of a '90s corporate training video. It also features the xylophone, the instrument of choice for any first-party looking to appeal to the casual side of the market.

The suite of applications includes PlayMemories Online, Home, Mobile and Studio. Online will apparently give users 5GB of cloud storage for media files. Home and Mobile are management tools for these media. For PS3 owners, however, the standout is likely to be Studio, a paid-for app that offers HD video editing capabilities.

Not much is known about Studio yet. but if it allows for native video capture and editing it may be worth the price. Let's just hope YouTube has the bandwith for the influx of CoD cross-map knife kill videos.



In Short

A brief look at this month's news



- Medal of Honor: Warfighter has been
- EA sent copies of **Mass Effect 3** into space. Unfortunately, things got off to a disappointing
- DICE is still working on the epic **Battlefield 3** patch. In a post on the Battlefield Battlelog general gameplay fixes we spotted this little nugget hidden away in the vehicle section:
- Borderlands 2 has warned us to watch our (dub) step ahead of launch, promising "96.5% more WUB WUB." Frankly, this is an excessive that there will be a mind-boggling 870 Gajillion we can only hope the dev team has filled the
- Developer Nnooo is bringing Escape Vector
- SEGA will be bringing Virtua Fighter 5 to items. Oh, and two more players. Is it the "ultimate in one perfect package" that Sega's Haruki Satomi
- We suppose it was only a matter of time, but crafty jerry rig a Fighting Stick to work with his PS Vita.
- ▶ **Whoops**: on page 9 of *The Official PS Vita* Buyer's Guide the Starter Pack is erroneously described as including a 4GB Memory Card.





INTERVIEW

Swinging into action

Brant Nicholas, Executive Producer at Beenox, tells us why *The Amazing Spider-Man* is going to let you live out your web-slinging fantasies in their brand-new open world romp



OPS: How does your game follow the film of the same name? Brant Nicholas:

The Amazing Spider-Man videogame actually takes place as an epilogue. It is a completely original story that takes Spider-Man's relationship with Curt Connors (aka: The Lizard) in new and unexpected directions. On the videogame development side, one of the most exciting aspects of being inspired by the story reboot within the film universe is that it lets us tease new directions on familiar story threads.

OPS: How long have you been working on this?

BN: For well over a year prior to our announcement at last year's New York Comic-Con. Looking back at past *Spider-Man* successes, we all loved the fun of swinging around in Manhattan. However, at that time Beenox had never built an engine that could support free-roaming gameplay.

As a result, we began working right away to take the best parts of our proprietary Goliath Engine from Shattered Dimensions and expand its capabilities to maintain the fast-paced, web-slinging action Spider-Man is known for and support a living, breathing city as well. All in all, it's taken us two years to reach this point and we're all pleased with the result.

OPS: Shattered Dimensions offered a lot of variety to its fans. What are some of the challenges in making a diverse game that's focussed on just one Spider-Man rather than a number of Spider-Men?

BN: To help stay true to the variety that our fans loved in *Shattered Dimensions*,

Beenox worked together with both Marvel and Sony to create exciting new re-imagined versions of multiple Marvel classic villains specifically for the video game in the same spirit as the film universe.

Throughout the game, you encounter these new villains, not only in story-driven indoor levels, but also during the free-roaming experience of the city itself. Each villain has their own unique environments and 'lairs' that makes the best use of their specific powers, but we've fit it all within the context of modern-day Manhattan.

OPS: Can you tell us what Spider-Man (the character) will feel like as we whip around the city? How has your design philosophy changed with the change in tone to something more serious?

BN: One of the most challenging parts of Beenox creating a game within the movie universe is working hard to honor Mark Webb's vision of the *Spider-Man* reboot being a more "grounded" and realistic character. To honor this, we changed everything from our art style to our game physics.

One exciting example of the successes we've had is a complete adaptation of our combat system, away from a 'comic' style of large web-hammers and hurricanes, toward a system of physics-driven moves and the use of webs to gain an advantage in combat.

Beenox has also introduced the "Web Rush" game mechanic, which is a completely new way to perceive Spider-Man's ability to choose between multiple options at all times whether it's in-combat or just flipping and swinging his way through Manhattan.

Web Rush lets you grab objects in the environment and slam them into your enemies, or pick an antenna on top of a sky-scraper and then watch as Spidey flips, jumps, runs on walls of buildings, etc. all just to get there in a way that no previous Spider-Man title ever made possible.

S VAULT

2002

Issue 1, and we started in the same vein as we intended to continue: big and bold. There was ou interview with videogame



luminary and man behind *Deus Ex*,
Warren Spector, then we went for a spin
in a rally car with the late Colin McRae,
right after a massive hands-on *Virtua Fighter 4* preview and a damning look at *WipEout*-wannabe *Jet Ion GP* ("*Jet Ion GP* is set to be released with... staggering
flaws"). We were right; it was rubbish.

2008

Aliens:
Colonial
Marines was
our big cover
feature. Yes,
the Gearboxdeveloped
shooter that
we saw last
year at E3.



Even back in 2008 we were excited by it, and looking at the screenshots it seemed to be in reasonably good shape. Meanwhile, we were more than a little agitated that Codemasters' racer *GRiD* had chopped out V8 content. Despite the cut, this change in tone from their usual *TOCA/V8* affair was a winner.

2011

Oh Duke.
We had such hopes for you with mostly positive impressions after a decent hands-on session. We were more rabid about



why Sony's NGP (now known as Vita) was going to be king of handheld gaming. Perhaps our crowning achievement on p59 was our feature on the R18+debate, featuring a man in a Hawaiian shirt, grabbing his crotch. Clearly it worked: the R18+ rating is on the way!



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In their WORDS

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



spent several years of haven't already."

Starbreeze Studios' Easter egg message to pirates as found in Syndicate. If only we could purchase it in Oz. Sigh..



"The truth is, if items like map packs, DLC missions and pre-order bonuses With each new bold companies are testing the waters to see just how far

An outside the industry take on DLC as seen in Forbes, a business and economics-focused publication.



"It takes to bug-fix, certify.

manufacture, and ship game discs. In that time we work on DLC."

Bioware's Casey Hudson explains Mass Effect 3's day one DLC to angry fans on Twitter.



"PlatinumGames is one of

the few studios in the world

making truly great single-

player action games."

INTERVIEW

Son of Anarchy

Talking online brawling with Anarchy Reigns producer Atsushi Inaba

Going from the one-man-army style of your previous games (MadWorld and Bayonetta) to an online multiplayer focus is a big shift. How have you tackled it? Atsushi Inaba: I personally believe PlatinumGames is one of the few studios in the world making truly great single-player action games. However, we had no background creating games focused on online play, so we began development on Anarchy Reigns, knowing it would be an exciting and challenging experience.

What can you tell us about Anarchy Reign's cast of returning characters and new IP?

AI: A number of characters from our previous title MadWorld appear, including Jack. the Baron and Mathilda. As a game focused on multiplayer brawling, it was essential we provide

an intriguing line-up of fighters. MadWorld was full of unique characters that fit the criteria, so we brought them into the world of Anarchy Reigns.

Some of the multiplayer maps look absolutely huge. How have you balanced this to keep the combat focused?

AI: We took great pains in balancing Anarchy Reigns' maps so they would be applicable to several game modes. If they were too small, players would simply crowd into each other: if they were too large, players might never encounter each other. The maps did have to be somewhat varied lest combat becoming boring, but by giving meaning to certain areas with features like Action Trigger Events environmental change and the freefor-alls that occur when item boxes drop, we were able to avoid the problems I just mentioned. Using the landscape to your advantage is an important part of the gameplay in Anarchy Reigns.

Other than previous PlatinumGames titles, what combat games have influenced Anarchy Reigns?

AI: We didn't use any games for reference, because there are no previous examples of a close-range multiplayer online brawler. Nor are there any games that influenced us. We simply pursued what we thought was fun and followed through.

The Action Trigger Events (ATEs) sound absolutely epic. We can't wait to play with them. Can you explain them for our readers and describe one of your favourites?

AI: Think of ATEs as a feature that increases the excitement factor of the gameplay. In a multiplayer

brawler, you must be constantly aware of the other players' actions. But you must also adapt to environmental changes, or you won't do very well. If you use ATEs

to your advantage, you can even turn a hugely disadvantageous one-against-many situation around; that's what the system is all about. Each ATE alters the environment drastically, so I can't talk about them all, but one of my favorites is the Microwave Array. An entire district is targeted by an outer space array and effectively becomes a giant microwave oven. How will the player avoid it? Players will have a lot on their minds, and are forced to react quickly to ever-changing situations.

Do you see *Anarchy Reigns* only appealing to hardened fighting game fans or will it pull new players into the genre?

AI: I think existing franchises have already taken one-on-one fighting games to the limit. Anarchy Reigns is a new genre; a close-range multiplayer online brawler. We're developing it with the hope that it'll appeal to a wide range of players, including fighting game fans.

Naz Pattison

Naz has better

waste time playing

glorified Barbie dolls

with create-a-player

options. When he pays

for entertainment.

he expects to be

entertained

IN YOUR FACE

Is create-a-character a good gaming feature?



James Cottee YES

James disagrees with anyone who believes we should dress the same, as though our lives were some sort of fruity North Korean beauty pageant.

eaders of a certain age will recall the first Ltime they played Final Fight; the first time they were confronted with the choice of playing as Guy, Cody, or Mayor Mike Haggar. Each had unique abilities, but only one had a bristling moustache, a mighty trouser strap, and pectoral muscles so wide they barely fit in the character select screen It was an inspiring sight, and a

"Likewise, self-respect is not an optional extra. We

deserve freedom of choice."

prime example of why player choice in aesthetic matters is important. If you want to play as the manliest man alive, the game designers should respect your wishes.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is Metal Gear Solid 2, a game that let you control Solid Snake for a whole five minutes before squeezing you into the rubber Sulking Suit of that girly-man Raiden. Gamers felt betrayed. In Raiden's new game they've gone even further, and put him in lipstick and high heels and there's nothing we can do about it.

We expect games to include some features as standard: high-def graphics, surround sound, trophies, etc. Likewise, self-respect is not an optional extra. We deserve freedom of choice.

Obviously, context matters. Nathan Drake wouldn't tool around dodging explosions in a novelty space suit, but stuff and nonsense are bread and butter to the loony gangsters of Saints Row.

Videogames should give us as much opportunity for self-expression as they can get away with. After all, the whole medium is about choice. Ask your gut: would Final Fight be quite the same if you could only choose between Raiden. Raiden, and Raiden? Hardly.

think create-a-character functionality has become an overused crutch for lazy game developers. A critical part of crafting a compelling gaming experience is a strong and recognisable central character, especially when it comes to an engaging story. You can't throw a lump of clay on a table, then tell your audience "make something with that, and then I'll tell you a good story about it." Replacing defined characters with created ones always compromises the story you can tell. Fact.

Asking your audience to create their own lead

characters is also just plain lazy. How would

"Replacing defined characters with created ones always compromises the story you can tell. Fact."

vou feel if you popped the Star Wars Blu-ray in your PS3, only to be told that before you can watch it you have to pick between 217 different hairstyles and countless other inane trivialities to determine how Han Solo looks? Screw that. I watch movies to be entertained, not to play Barbie dolls. And if we want games to have storylines that are as entertaining

> arguments about Raiden as well. You say there was nothing we could do about it when Konami put that blonde sissy in MGS2, yet the greatest choice of all is always available; the choice of whether or not to buy the game. Trust me, game

> > made a bad character very fast if you don't buy their game. I want the choice to be able to reward artists who create great games and films, with great characters in them. I don't want to be forced to do their job for them.



Want to get into a great debate with one of us here at OPS, or a fellow reader? Well you'd best hop onto www.facebook.com/OPSAustralia and make your case there. Argue well enough (and without resorting to name-calling or promises of violence) and you might just see your topics find their way into the magazine!



Around the World in PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



PINBALL HERO DIES

PARK RIDGE, U.S.A.

Steve Kordek, the man responsible for inventing pinball machines as we know them, has died. Kordek personally introduced dual flippers. Before that pinball machines apparently used six flippers. Remember them with six? Neither do we. That's how much Kordek changed the game. Respect. Kordek also introduced multi-ball play. drop targets and directcurrent flippers (enabling more sensitive play). He not only lived to the ripe age of 100 but he also created more than 100 pinball games himself, his final being based on the National Lampoon movies. Trophy Earned: Being a Gaming Legend!



SPACE ELEVATOR!

IN ORBIT, SPACE

A handful of ambitious Japanese engineers are claiming they'll have a space elevator completed by 2050, enabling regular plebs to visit space as a tourist destination. It won't be quite as easy as walking into a lift and pressing the 'S' floor. The top of the elevator is more than 35,000 kilometres high. Even travelling at its turbo-lift speed of 190km/h that's eight days you'll need to ride in the lift for, travelling 24 hours per day. Whoever said "In Space nobody can hear you scream" clearly wasn't stuck standing next to a fat guy farting for an eightday long lift ride. We stick to tropical beaches for our holidays, thanks.



MODERNISED WAR

MOSCOW, RUSSIA

Clearly the Russian soldiers had weapon-envy when they played Modern Warfare because they've managed to convince the government to sign off on a \$700 billion upgrade. If they're expecting futuristic Terminatorstyle killer robots and laser-blasting orbital space stations for the \$700 billion they'll be disappointed. Apparently all this fortune buys is some updated submarines and aircraft, as well as new machine guns with detachable sights and torches. We're not kidding either. Updating the aging Kalashnikov assault rifles with these detachable features is the main focus of the new defence budget.



#1 HERO UNMASKED

THE INTERNET

The votes are in and the world's most popular comic book hero has been named by Comic Heroes Magazine. We'll give you a clue. It wasn't Catwoman. Still need more? Okay, the winner starred in a game that was one of 2011's most successful titles and it rhymed with Raiders of the Lost Arkham City. Batman has nabbed the top spot. Understandable really since he's wall-to-wall awesome. He's a character with enough money to buy his own country and populate it with supermodels, but instead spends his time beating super-powered villains senseless, despite having no powers himself. Case closed. He wins!



GAMES FIX YOU

ONTARIO, CANADA

We can finally put a bullet in any lingering claims that videogames aren't good for you. A team of doctors in Canada have been successfully treating patients with a rare eye disorder by prescribing videogames. Firstperson shooting games, where subjects have to focus their eyes directly ahead of them, and also require them to track moving objects, were found to increase vision noticeably. Patients who had played the games were able to consistently read further down the eyesight chart than those who hadn't. Sounds like 'checkmate' for the videogames naysayers out there, if you ask us.

INTERNATIONAL TOP 5 CHARTS

EUROPE



- 1 Final Fantasy XIII-2 Square Enix
- 2 UFC Undisputed 3 THQ
- 3 Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3
 Activision
- 4 FIFA Soccer 12 EA
- 5 Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception Sony Computer Entertainment

JAPAN



- 1 Binary Domain Sega
- 2 Gran Turismo 5
- Sony Computer Entertainment

 3 Armored Core V From Software
- 4 Final Fantasy XIII-2 Square Enix
- 5 Resident Evil 5 Capcom

USA



- 1 Twisted Metal Sony Computer Entertainment
- 2 UFC Undisputed 3 THQ
- **3 Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3**Activision
- 4 Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning EA
- 5 Final Fantasy XIII-2 Square Enix

nternational publishers may differ from local one

THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and the good stuff!

Wait, what?

The PS3 Move game Outdoors Unlimited releases today and the paradox it represents could unhinge time-space logic as we know it.



Tissues on hand

Everything old is new again today, thanks to the release of *Devil May Cry HD Collection*. Dante is back and making demons reach for the Klepney



A

Bring a brolly

Silent Hill Downpour, the game we 7'ed in OPS 66, releases today. It's haunted by some minor design issues, but the scare sure is there.



Talk to me Goose
Top Gun: Hard Lock,
the game that's merely
a typo away from the
film's subtext, releases
today. Hey, who's up for
volleyball?!



Apr 5

Reach for the sky

Birds of Steel releases today and features either WWII planes engaged in daring deeds, or literal metal birds that probably can't fly for anything.



Apr 6

Things'll get a little blue

Come along and chillax today at the Blues and Roots Festival in Byron Bay. Headliners include Cold Chisel, The John Butler Trio and more!



Prototype 2 releases today and pits two New York shape-shifting destructors against one another. First one to change into Mr Stay Puft: loses.



Apr 26

Wanderlust

Go to cinemas today and Judd Apatow will spin you a tale including Jennifer Aniston, Paul Rudd and a nudist colony mistaken as a Bed and Breakfast.

shoulders above the rest.



Can't miss... Battleship

The movie based on a thing that nobody ever thought would be a movie releases today. Personally, we thought it'd be a couple of hours of two counanders yelling out co-ordinates, but apparently it features enough CGI explosions to give Michael Bay half a mongrel.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A ...

Rageaholic

OPTION 1

person who gets buzzed by expressing

randomly unleashed headbutts in order to help the chronically angry. out and hug somebody, so much as they want to garrote people with an

That being the case, here's an quick inversion of the 12 steps to inner peace. Don't take responsibility such a way as to track how bad it away like a fine nitroglycerine wine). Do not stop speaking, do not walk away from confrontation and to talk to you. Don't just stare at people, get your glare on to a point where your retinas are in danger of popping out of your skull. Raise in such a way as to make nearby dogs soil themselves. Sprinkle your speech with curses and intermix it with childish name-calling (pro tip: mothers and barnyard animals are a correlation made in heaven).

Throw things; the heavier the sarcastic and roll your eyes. Last. but not least, don't confine your outbursts to the privacy of your domicile; take them for a drive.

Follow these steps and you'll have a bright future as both a rageaholic, and a soon-to-beconvicted felon. Nicely done.

TIME:

A full afternoon of extreme dickery is all it'll take. Cops take a while to respond, you know.

OPTION 2

Turn on Asura's Wrath, watch the opening cutscene.

TIME:

Two minutes. Tops.



INTERVIEW

Suda known better

We sit down with visionary game designer **Suda51** and pick his brains on *Lollipop Chainsaw*.

Lollipop Chainsaw reminds us a lot of the classic 2D beat 'em ups that we grew up with. Did any 2D games influence you? Suda51: Well, I was in high school when the Nintendo Entertainment System (Famicon) was released. Before that, I'm not really sure if it influenced me, but I've played Space Invader and Pac Man in arcades.

We love the game's wacky humor. It's rare to see comedic gaming titles. Why? Suda51: That's a tough question. I guess it depends on whether the creator intends to make it comedic or not. I believe there are a pretty good number of comedic games. It's how you perceive it. Some people can see a really sad story as comedy.

What pop culture "...the first thing we inspired Lollipop? I mean, we noticed purchased for our reference some interesting was the replica chainsaw skins (Ash Campbell) and head nods (San model from one of our Romero) in our demo... favourite zombie movies." Suda51: True, it's kind of like a preview for a

The mixture of splatter and pop art style is the biggest attraction of Lollipop Chainsaw. By the way, the first thing we purchased for our reference was the replica chainsaw model from one of our favourite zombie movies. This title is influenced not only by zombie movies, but by American popular culture as well as their music.

grindhouse movie, like Machete, yes?

What can you tell us about Juliet's boyfriend? Does his usefulness increase over time, or is he purely there as a fashion accessory/comedy relief for Juliet?

Suda51: The head Juliet carries is her boyfriend "Nick". He almost became a zombie, but just before the zombie poison spread around his body, Juliet cut off his head and gave him holy power to save

him. Since then, he is strapped around her hip and they take on the journey together. He helps Juliet in combat as he can be attached to a headless zombie to use its power. Also he plays a key role in the story. This might remind you of Garcia and Johnson in Shadows of the Damned, somewhat, but I'd like players to pay attention to the great dialogue between Juliet and Nick written by James Gunn!

What sort of cool stuff can we unlock for Juliet? We noticed a maid outfit...

Suda51: As you've noticed, we have a variety of costumes for Juliet. And we have prepared different ways to get them as well. I like them all, so I'd like to show all of them soon. We also have many abilities and items that can be collected.

> How does it feel to be a popular Japanese designer in a climate where some of your contemporaries are bemoaning a lack of quality/innovation in? What's your secret? Suda51: I'm honoured. I'm

very appreciative and grateful. If there is such a thing as a secret to success, I'd like to know as well!

I don't really think about anything in particular. but if anything, I always have a strong drive to create something new while we continue making games everyday.

Were there any comments or criticisms that you took from Shadows of the Damned to refine Lollipop Chainsaw as a game? Suda51: Not really, but in the end, Lollipop

Chainsaw has been shaped with some designs that were not seen in Shadows of the Damned.

Thanks for your time and your games. Suda51: Thank you for the chance to talk to you as well.

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TOP TEN

Games that could be **Kart Racers**

With newly announced LittleBigPlanet Karting potentially allowing us to make the kart racer of our dreams, we threw on our game developer hats to work out which 10 games could finally have us swimming in our pool of money.



God of War

If history is any guide, Kratos' entry wouldn't worry about what happens on the track, or even racing for that matter; but instead place a greater emphasis on post race shenanigans. Extra-explicit mini-game-collection for first place anyone?



This is intense kart racing with plenty of soul. Ico might be a competent puzzle solver, but can you speed him through a castle, Yorda in toe, before crazy spirits trap you and your kart in an evil vortex? Can you?

Uncharted

One word - Unkarted. Yes, it's the pun so perfect it has to be real! After all, Naughty Dog do have a naughty habit of turning their franchises into racers so it can't be long before you're finally rear-ending Elena. It would also allow Drake and Sully to yell more sweet nothings to each other, and who doesn't love that?



PaRappa the Rapper

Bored of going through the motions? Enter PaRappa the Rapper Racing, where it's not about your skills behind the wheel, but how well you can rock a rhyme. Show off your rhythmic button pressing prowess to all the ladies.



Star Wars

Every fan boy's childish fantasy would come true if only LucasArts realised this potential. Forget pod racing; imagine intense lightsaber duels as you race. Plus, you would finally be able to decapitate Jar Jar, and that's always a good thing.



Just in case ModNation Racers wasn't hardcore enough for you, From Software can change all that. Accidently hit another player? You die. Take one bad corner? You die. Get hit by a pesky item? You die. You get the idea.



Most kart racers are seen as shallow

and superficial in the narrative

department, but not this bad boy.

track would no doubt have more

twist-filled plot points than you can

Hideo Kojima's initial foray onto the

Metal Gear Solid

Skylanders

Skylanders is already big business for the little ones; so naturally, the seamless transition into kart racer is the only next logical step. Simply palm off a brand new selection of figurines, then sit back and watch the cash come to daddy.



Everybody knows slow motion makes everything awesome. To take Max Payne's bullet time function then, and mash it with the traditional power slide is a match made in heaven. On an unrelated note, races now take 30 minutes to complete.

Grand Theft Auto

Unadulterated violence and a bucket loads of swears? No matter which way you look at it, there is no way a Grand Theft Auto racer would be anything less than incredible. Frustrated at that person in front of you? Simply drive them into a wall, put a bullet in their noggin, steal their kart and take off again. Yep, we told you.





INFOCUS

Ridge Racer Unbounded

e hope Criterion, creators of the Burnout series is looking in its rear vision mirror. Because this destructeriffic bad boy is making a move to overtake.

Aside from belting other drivers, the best way to build nitrous in Unbounded is to lay waste to the track itself: grinding concrete and punching through walls. It sounds downright liberating, if you ask us.

But there's more to this than fouling up the feng shui of your favourite city. You can also build your own, in what appears to be one of the most accessible level editors out there. We can't wait to bust out our LEGO skills to make (and then break)



IN REALITY

Freaky Fog Towns from Hell

As seen in: Silent Hill

fter eight or so Silent Hill games, we're all quite familiar with this horror trope: sleepy American town gets engulfed in a fog and evil crap starts happening. For the record: we think a white wall of death is a much cooler environment to scare people in (rather than utter darkness), but where exactly did the idea to use fog come from? Imagination or a real-life place and/or event?

The Stephen King fans among you will likely be waving your arms in the air with what you think is the correct answer. Yes, you're onto something, the fog-filled fun of the original Silent Hill were inspired somewhat by King's novel The Mist. That's the novel involving a (literal) freak storm that shrouds a town in mist and unleashes a species of blood-thirsty creatures.

That's all well and good for fiction, but what if we told you that there's a town in America that has been perpetually shrouded in the sort of low visibility fog that would make most Jeebus-fearing people wet their pants, pack their shit and leave?

Welcome to Centralia, USA, where death and foreboding hangs in the air like the devil's flatulence.

You see, there's been a coal mine burning underneath this cursed town for near half a century and it has enough fuel to burn for another 250 years. The town has been erased from maps, the roads in are closed, signs are posted everywhere about toxic gas emissions and the cemeteries have a greater population than the



town ever had. That's assuming the underground fire hasn't spread to the cemeteries, in which case the dead rest uneasily in their wood-fired ovens.

Time-travel back to 1962 and Centralia was a growing community of about 1100 residents. The town sat upon one of the richest veins of anthracite coal in the United States. Now there are *four* people who live there; we can't account for how many there are in the insectiod lobster tentacle beast population living in the mist itself.

One of the residents is Lamar Mervine, the town's 86-year-old mayor, who is the real-life equivalent of your "I ain't leavin' fer nothing" horror victim stereotype. He recalls how no one took action for four or five months to try and put out the fire and when they did, it was too little, too late. He is determined to stay in Centralia and tell his story to

all who ask about it.

Of course, if you want to walk into town and hear that story you'll be playing Russian roullete with your life. There have been reports of the ground crumbling beneath unwary people. Most notably, in 1981, 12-year-old Todd Domboski nearly fell and/or burned to his death when a sinkhole two metres wide and 45 metres deep opened up beneath him.

With this massive underground fire infecting 400 acres of Centralia, the state of Pennsylvania basically condemned the entire town, and spent \$42 million in government funds relocating most of its residents.

If you have the minerals to holiday in this place it'll paint you the very portrait of *Silent Hill*. Visibility is low, crazy folk watch you distrustfully and at any moment, hell will open up and eat you whole. Tell your friends!

Conspiracy

Studies have shown that if the Centralia fire is not contained it'll continue to spread following the rich coal deposits and eventually threaten the neighboring town of Ashland, less that two miles away.

Many former residents of Centralia insist that there is more to this story than meets the eve. Some believe that the rich deposits of coal beneath the town itself is the reason for the forced relocation of the towns people and to force the town to go defunct, thereby giving up its mineral rights cheaply. Sounds like a pretty unlikely conspiracy to us. Clearly the Morlocks. CHUDS and mole people are behind this. Get off their lawn, humans.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

2.2

The number of dollars in millions (and counting) that Tim Schafer's fans have coughed up to fund his next game.

Percentage of Golden Abyss copies that constitute PS Vita software sales in the UK

31



Separated at Birth!

NO. 37 Mass Effect 2's Shepard and Mark Vanderloo



After playing countless hours of *Mass Effect 2* we were surprised to find out that Commander Shepard is indeed a real person. Dutch supermodel Mark Vanderloo was scanned by Bioware to create one of the most iconic interstellar arse-kickers of all time. We always figured default Shep was created using Bioware's character building technology. Please, Bioware, tell us ranga FemShep is real...



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OPINION

BRING BACK THE BIFF

Online multiplayer has become too serious and needs to remember its roots

a twelve year-old, screeching "I got

you, Dude" while he teabags you, "

n the tidal wave of online technology that has opened up the split-screen ponds we used to swim in and transformed them into a seething ocean of opponents, there's always a bigger fish. I'll be honest, I had a lot more fun with multiplayer modes when I was a big fish in a little pond, diving through bouts of TimeSplitters, Burnout 3. SoulCalibur 2 and Mashed. Four mates crowded around a PS2, dishing out rapid-fire bullets, beatings, car wrecks and beer-soaked trashtalk

as we battled for victory and bragging rights.

Online multiplayer promised so much. No longer would you have to

drag your friends around to your place for a game. From your couch you could challenge not just your friends, but millions around the globe, in the granddaddy of all royal rumbles. Piddly 2-4 player split-screen was tossed on the trash pile as developers rushed to outdo each other with bigger bullet points on the back of the box, until MAG ended the arms race with its 256-player tactical nuke.

In this brave new online battlefield it became clear that time-poor weekend warriors like myself, who wanted to dip into a rare multiplayer stoush were not welcome.

The survival of the fittest nature of the new global online ocean means former big fish have as much hope as a sardine against a Great White shark; and usually that Great White will be a 12-year-old, screeching "I got you, Dude" while he teabags you.

Am I just a grumpy old man who's bitter about being thrashed by kids? Well, yes. But that doesn't mean multiplayer needs to only cater to youngsters with more hours of weekly free time than they have brain cells. There's no doubt current online multiplayer does a far better job of letting the world's most hardened FPS players compete endlessly for supremacy in the latest CoD and Battlefield games. What it doesn't do well is allow time-poor or casual gamers to

dip easily into multiplayer without being mulched.

How do we fix it? Segregation. It's time to fence that little pond off again. Having two separated pools of gamers would benefit both. Casual gamers could dip into games without being obliterated by veteran gamers, and the vets can compete seriously without being distracted by guys running around, shooting at their feet and grumbling, "What the f#@k's an invert?" To make the two gated

gaming communities work "... usually that Great White will be you'd need some sensible rules, rather than simple user selection. Needing to clock up a set number of weekly hours before you

could enter the Veteran games would make sense. And if you're clocking in serious multiplayer hours you should be blocked from entering the Casual games.

Sony also need to make that virtual couch with your friends a lot comfier if we're going to be able to recreate the vibe of classic PS2 multiplayer nights. Unless your friends list is filled wall-to-wall with seasoned players, the only way you're ever going to get four or more of your mates into the one game is by ringing around and hassling them.

Instead of the simple 'online' and 'unavailable'

status options on PSN we need a much more visible and transparent system. Yes, you can already see if one of your mates is playing the same game as you, but you're never sure if it's a good time for a multiplayer request.

What would work better is if people are prompted, "Are you open to multiplayer games this session?" whenever they pop the game in. If you're playing Uncharted 3 you should see prompts flash up like, "Adam is also playing Uncharted 3 and is open to multiplayer." This sort of system would be like a virtual version of a six-pack of beer sitting next to your mate while he's playing PlayStation. It says, "I like to party. And I've got spare beer for my friends."



Naz Pattison misses his glory days of PS2 gaming. Hassling Sony to recreate them is a lot easier than building a time machine. Plus he's lazy.







OPINION

KEEP THE FAITH

There's a story to tell

lot of things confuse me. Quadratic equations. Netball. The enduring popularity of The Big Bang

But as confused as I am about why there's a barrage of canned laughter after every single sentence uttered during The Big Bang Theory, a recent comment from Nintendo's Masahiro Sakurai has left me even more confused

Sakurai thinks "movies and such are much better at telling stories in an effective and

enjoyable way than games are."

Why do game developers talk down the capabilities of their chosen medium? It doesn't make any sense. It irks me, to be honest.

Don't misinterpret me; I'm not calling out Sakurai because he

works for Nintendo. Sure, I may find the sickeningly sweet Nintendo universe sapping. Sure, I may have said to more than one person that they might as well give you roof racks with that enormous second stick add-on for the 3DS,

because a handheld with the dimensions of a canoe isn't going to fit in your pocket. But none of that matters. What matters is this guy has chosen to make videogames, and has done so successfully for many years, and yet still sells them short.

I just can't get behind the philosophy that story isn't important in videogames.

Story isn't important to Tetris. I don't need to know why these blocks are falling from the top of the screen to the bottom. But Tetris is a puzzle game. It's the digital equivalent of those little plastic mazes with the ball-bearing inside you get in showbags. It's an activity.

But not all videogames are Tetris.

"Movies and such" do not have the monopoly on telling stories in an effective and enjoyable way. Some games tell amazing stories. Mass Effect: deep and rich. Uncharted. loveable and rollicking. Red Dead Redemption, epic and gritty. They're just a few examples of well-conceived stories well-told in videogames. The tight, excellent gameplay present in these titles keeps you having fun, and the respectable narratives keep you interested in the outcome.

Look at Fight Night Champion. The developers took a

boxing game and put a story in it. And it made it better.

Claiming games can't tell stories well is simply a crutch for people interested only in developing shallow games. "Bash these buttons to make things happen! Make enough things happen and you'll reach the credits!

Look! Flashing lights! You wins!" It's an excuse for shipping superficial experiences that sacrifice engagement and investment for brainless bleeps and bloops.

If I just wanted something to keep my hands busy I'd

just play with a ball-in-a-cup, or retire to my room with Alison Brie and Gillian Jacobs GQ photo shoot of the pair doing stuff to each other their father's would hate.

There is no shortage of games out there that have no story whatsoever; they're all on my wife's phone and I never play any of them. They're boring. Vapid.

Give me something meaty. Give me something I can escape into. Give me Mass Effect 3, for instance, an epic in which the story plays out in myriad ways.

Games aren't worse than films at telling stories. They just tell them differently.

Come on. What good is a director with no faith in his format?





Angry Sackboy

Angry Sackboy is an ex-videogame journalist and lover of fine film, great books and excellent video games. He loves nothing more than a happy ending

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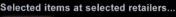




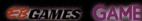
























inbox



▼ LETTER OF THE MONTH

UPGS: CONFIRMED



Speak to us!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

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...email...
ops@citrusmedia.
com.au

...and also on Facebook! facebook.com/ OPSAustralia he announcement of Uncharted: Golden Abyss alone was enough to convince me that I needed to purchase the PlayStation Vita on release date.

Now, like most PlayStation gamers, I'm a huge *Uncharted* fan and have dedicated a number of hours toward platinum-ing all three games in the franchise. The screenshots and gameplay of *Golden Abyss* had me salivating even before release date.

Since the announcement of Golden Abyss, I put some money aside and was proudly able to purchase both a PS Vita and the game on release date. At the moment, I don't have any other PS Vita games other than Uncharted and my friends tend to look at me weirdly when I say that I bought it just to have the chance to play one game alone.

Now I know that there are already a number of great launch titles for the Vita, but none of them seem to really tickle my fancy

TURTLE BEAD

(you can probably tell that I'm a very particular

gamer). For the first few days of playing with PS Vita, I had labelled the system as being the Uncharted Portable Gaming System (UPGS) due to my obsession with the franchise. Now that I've have a few more days of playing around with the system, I've realised how great the Vita actually is. I am dumbfounded by how great the visuals are. The PlayStation Vita has just proven to me how great and innovative the minds at Sony are, and I would just like to congratulate them on their work. Anyway guys, thanks for taking the time to read my email. Keep up the great work with the mag!

P.S. Which PS Vita game would you highly recommend at this moment in time?

Edmond Sherifi, via email

We can't blame you in the slightest for your *Uncharted* obsession. Drake's antics are consistently the high-water-mark for PlayStation games. Our vote for the No. 2 Vita game goes to *Super Stardust Delta*. It's utterly addictive and perfectly suited to small bursts of handheld gaming. And it's only \$12.95. Case closed.

LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS AN:

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SOLO V MULTI. FIGHT!

Dear OPS.

About a year ago, I had a conversation with my school chums that went something like this: "I just bought *Mass Effect 2*," I said, "and it is by far one of the greatest games in the universe".

Being a big fan of science fiction, I did indeed believe it to be one of the greatest games in the universe. I went on to rave about the amazing story that had the player go out to collect some of the richest, deepest characters ever conceived. I spoke endlessly of how the 'Renegade/ Paragon' conversational opportunities allow the player to sculpt a bold and interesting protagonist, and would have continued about the inspired soundtrack and architecture if I hadn't have been interrupted by one of my friends. "What's the multiplayer like?" he asked.

A little befuddled, I responded saying it doesn't have multiplayer. He laughed, "then what do you do?" I was stunned. It's like saying 'what's the point in seeing a movie if there isn't a blooper reel in the credits?' One of my other friends jumped in, saying how he had played Mass Effect 2 for a while at a friend's house. "The gameplay was crap, the player moves around ridiculously and there are way too many cutscenes and not enough action."

After a not-so-lengthy conversation, I realised my friends didn't know the plotline to half the games they played, simply because they didn't care. "Why do you play games then?" I asked, and the group collectively responded with "we're in it to win it."

I simply couldn't grasp the concept of playing a video game like it's a sport, to me the line was pretty clear between games and sports. I knew they were not necessarily divided, but to actually pick up a game without playing through the campaign or plotline and going straight to competitive multiplayer was beyond me. I think only about two of them actually had a single-player game. I put this nonsense behind me, and continued on through my science fiction epic.

But now I'm afraid. Looking back, some of my favourite single player games have moved away from the story and narrative, instead appeasing the trigger-happy multiplayer fanatics. Assassin's Creed and AC2 were some of my favourite games, focusing on a 'science fiction meets historical fantasy' style game, exploring the lives of a born and bred killer, and a Florentine noble that had this world thrust upon him after the death of



most of his family.

When Brotherhood was released, I was excited for another excellence instalment for the saga, and perhaps a dabble in multiplayer when I completed the campaign. Unfortunately, the campaign was at best a lengthy piece of DLC, and the multiplayer was equally disappointing. Revelations repeated this mistake, giving us a half-arsed plotline in a boring same-same city and lousy new game mechanics. It would seem multiplayer has become Ubisoft's new prime directive.

Uncharted 2 introduced multiplayer that was every bit as good as the campaign, which then carried on into Uncharted 3 as well. I love the multiplayer in Uncharted, but I was extremely disappointed when I found there was no in-game store in single player, to purchase colour palettes, guns, skins, perks and so on with in-game currency. That's what kept me coming back to experience Naughty Dog's brilliance. My own personal taste would also lead me to believe Uncharted 2's plot was better than Uncharted 3's.

At this point I began seeing a pattern. Now even BioWare are giving cooperative multiplayer a go in *Mass Effect 3*, and while I love working as part of a team, when I look back at my favourite games being tarnished by the hopes of a successful, *CoD*-worthy multiplayer, I can't help but fear this addition will subtract from my beloved narrative.

When my friends said they were "in it to win it", I came to believe they were a minority of the gaming community. A significant portion of gamers, not large enough to influence a developer's love of strong story, and rich imagination. Now I can't help but wonder if I'm the minority, and that by the time I'm 25, we'll all be playing competitive multiplayer games ("with the free added bonus of single player!") and I'll have to start looking elsewhere for an engaging story and interesting characters.

Geordie McDonald, via email

Wow. That's quite a spleen vent, Geordie, but you make some very good points. When it comes to solo versus multiplayer, it's whatever flicks your switch – and, let's face it, the light is on and burning brightly for the multi-masses.

Honestly, after years and years of going through the same old mastubatory multiplayer motions gamers will get bored, older, and have less time to devote to the online grind. They'll naturally gravitate towards more meaningful solo experiences.

This may sound like a paradox on paper; but as a dedicated solo player, you'll never be alone.

MORE ZOMBIES? BAH!

Hey OPS,

Long-time reader, first time writing in. I love action/adventure games like the *Uncharted* series. But am surprised there are not many other games like it. There are plenty of action-adventure movies out there —

too many to mention – so why does is seem game developers are just making games with such dark and depressing themes?

There are just the three type of games I am hearing about lately, zombie, future shooter and post-apocalyptic. Seriously, both movie and game makers seem to be obsessed with their totally unique way of ending the world. Being dark and gritty is not a new idea and has not been for a while.

Does nobody making AAA game care about fresh ideas? Is it possible they are just making whatever is trending, just because 'different' is too hard or risky?

Also, is it just me or do a lot of the the newer game covers look the same; really dark with black and white text and graphics? It seems my local game store is turning emo. At least the upcoming Lollipop Chainsaw has colour.

I am also worried about Naughty Dog's *The Last of Us.* I'm sure it will look and play great, but it's just an over-done theme. **Matthew Gadsby**, via email

Yeah. We know. Zombies have been DONE. That said, it's Naughty Dog – they'll mix it up and deliver. It's what they do. You're partly right about studios making something familiar because of the risk, but there are plenty of original, freshly-presented ideas coming out in 2012. It feels like this is going to be a big year for gaming.

Cuttings

► Massively Affected
I WANT IT NOW!
Sonny Joseph Dean,
via Facebook

Well of course you want *Mass Effect 3.* That's just science.

► Quick question
Do you get overtime?
Paul Davis,

We get to DO overtime, if that's what you mean...

► Quick answer

Are your Vita trophies separate from your PS3 trophies?

Shannon Mckernan,
via Facebook

No

► Risk assessment

Catherine looks...fun!

James Ash,

Discard your concerns and wrinkled nose: it's quirky but great.

▶ In Hideo-ing
Just picked up my brand new
pre-ordered Metal Gear Solid HD.
Goodbye weekend.
Matt Thompson
via Facebook

Let us know if you escape with your brain in one piece after the Kojima mind screw.

Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia on facebook

▼ Storefront

What deliciousness have you bought lately?



Jared Parker

Batman: Arkham City
"Would be a buzz if it
featured the Batmobile."



Joel W. Meekings

Twisted Metal
"The beta was good, but
the full game is amazing!"



Matt Bloor

House of the Dead III

"Good old fashioned arcade
fun at a bargain PS+ price."



Catherine Mae
LittleBigPlanet PSP
"I never get sick of

playing it!"

Caption This ▶

You put the words to the screen. Simple.

Ben Shearer knows how to break the fourth wall. Maybe he can give Nathan some tips?

"Don't feel bad Drake; even Kratos and Lara need a QTE to open a door that big."



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Lollipop Chainsaw

Sucks to be zombies

ere's a conundrum for you. Juliet Starling is secretly part of a family of zombie hunters and she's worried about her boyfriend, Nick, finding out about her hobby and thinking she's 'the world's number one weirdo'.

Batshit solution: Nick 'finds out' when his body is eaten by his zombified high school classmates, thereby forcing Juliet to decapitate her beau and use magic to keep his head alive. As you do.

No, seriously. That's what happens. Welcome to Buffy meets Home and Away meets the TV ad for Mr. Sparkle.

After watching that teen soap opera unfold in a pre-rendered intro (narrated by the Valley girl tones of our heroine), we get hands on with the first two levels of Lollipop Chainsaw. Curiously, our journey starts in a first person view. Juliet is riding her bike to school through a crowd of her high school classmates. Literally 'through'; they're all zombies who explode into chunky kibbles as we plough into the main bus terminal. Juliet then leaps into the fray and the view switches to a *No More Heroes*, free-for-all hack and slasher.

As you'd imagine with a Suda51 game about a girl with a love-heart chainsaw, Juliet dishes out the pain in whacked-out way. There's no lock-on function to speak of, but you can zone into enemies by tapping (a) to unleash pompom attacks (read: light openers). Land a few of these 'rah-rahs' on a zombie and you have the option of expanding your combo by hitting (a) to deliver a heavy chainsaw attack, or **8** for a sweeping low chainsaw attack. The latter is useful for pruning off undead legs and targeting crawling zombies, the regular chainsaw attacks are good for lopping off the limbs of zombies bearing weapons, or their heads in a glorious spurt of gore. It's frenetic stuff, but you'll need to keep tabs on your assailants and know when to hit o to leapfrog over one of them to safety.



We also noticed the presence of finisher kills. Bashing away on a button had us chainsawing (a male) zombie in half from testicles to spectacles. Worse yet, any enemy that's prostrate on the deck can expect to have their prostate checked with your chainsaw.

It's gory, guilty-pleasure stuff, made even more entertaining by Juliet's colourful commentary. All the while, she abuses her enemies, calling them "gross", "lame" or "undead douchebags". One time she laments to herself that this is ("swear to God") the "gayest...birthday...ever". We raise two eyebrows at this, but we're told by local PR that this phrase won't be making the final cut. Mind you, they also tell us to prepare ourselves for even crazier one-liners.

As the level progresses we make our way through linear, level-based encounters where we have to crowd control a breed of zombie that exists halfway between shamblers and runners. Occasionally we're put in a small arena type environment where a few hapless survivors (who haven't been murdered in

a gratuitous cutscene) must be saved from the marauding hordes. This is typically the ideal time to use Juliet's Star meter. Tap a shoulder button and she pulses rainbow colours, emits clouds of love hearts, the song 'Hey Mickey' cranks loud and damage is doubled.

This zombie huntress starts out with a fairly basic moveset, but as you earn coins (which inexplicably spew out of your decapitated enemies) you can purchase better skills in special 'chop shops' dotted about the levels. A quick glance showed us that we could also enhance Juliet's core abilities of health, strength, homing distance and recovery by buying things like magic beans and aromatic yoga oil. Other items for purchase include new outfits to slip into, songs to groove to, concept art and more.

Saving schoolmates in distress seems to be the best way to earn moolah (and amusing 'thank you' dialogues), but as we said earlier, they're often killed before you get to them by out-of-control school buses. We see a half a dozen hit and runs to which Juliet comments, "man, zombies suck dick at driving". She gets even more vocal when you try to pan the camera in such a way as to peer up her skirt from either the front or the back (she'll block the view with a hand and call you a "perv"). Note: we were shown this, it wasn't discovered.

Your enemy types are 'out there' to say the least. You'll need to contend with mobs of infected firemen who breath flames on you whilst assuring you "we're here to save you". Also, every high school stereotype is represented here; you can catch jock zombies

NICK TICKETS

Any heavily barricaded door can be circumvented by jamming your chainsaw in it and using the analog stick to cut a new entry. However, extreme cases require you to stick Nick's head onto the body of a larger zombie in order to use it as a battering ram. Nick's lacking confidence though, so Juliet has to encourage him into it by doing her best cheerleading dance (i.e. quicktime events).

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incoming



propositioning one another for showers, and baseballers come at you with bats and fastballs. There's even a timed mini-game where you're thrust onto a basketball court and asked to beat the score on the board by chainsaw-uppercutting heads into the basket. This becomes harder than it sounds when defence zombies rock up and start beating you down and goal-tending the heads away.

The enemy types even include Juliet's ex-cheerleader friends who, once you lop their legs off, promptly switch into handstand positions and continue kicking at you with their bloody stumps. All the while they're shouting "go team" slogans about decapitation to you.

Disturbingly, Nick spots one of Juliet's old girlfriends and remarks, "damn, Agnes was hot as a human, but now she has intestines hanging out of her v-" You know what? We don't really need to finish that.

As our trek through the school continues, the situation gets progressively weirder. Juliet reaches a quadrangle, and when we look up a ghostly Viking ship rows through the skies with a demonic rock lord talking crap to another zombie hunter who's

trying to climb on board. The hunter pauses to wish Juliet a happy 18th birthday and throws a gift-wrapped present down on a parachute, like it ain't no thang.

Our new objective: go through the school and find where it landed. The first obstacle: a pack of ten zombie gridiron players who stack up in a menacing position and collectively howl, "ten hut, ten butt f--k".

Charming.

This serves as a chance to learn a new skill called the Chainsaw Dash. Holding a shoulder button causes Juliet to sprint and mow through her enemies, or to hit technicolor jump pads that launch us into cheerleader acrobatics (read: quicktime events). They're dotted around every few minutes or so and given how much of a tempo increase they are, almost feel like mini-vehicle sections (without vehicles, obviously).

Lollipop's strengths are its unique Japanese weirdness, and its twitch action and shock-factor. From what we've seen this will be the sort of game you can't put down because you can't predict who or what is going to be around the next corner. Let alone what filth they're going to spout.

"[Zombie cheerleaders] switch into handstand positions and continue kicking at you with their bloody stumps."

For example, we turned a few corners and one of them yielded a mid-boss who said he was going to do unspeakable things to his posterior... with our head.

Speaking of dodginess, we spotted a few issues that Suda51 often overlooks in his projects. In the build we played the camera control wasn't as streamlined as it ought be. Similarly, there's an odd disconnect going on between the over-the-top characters set against relatively drab-looking, barely interactive environments.

Obviously, we've only seen a small slice of this massacre; these issues could be rendered non-existent come launch. The fact is, we walked away from Suda51's latest with a bemused grin and a genuine itch to play some more of it. That said, don't miss our fuller unwrapping of *Lollipop* in a future issue of *OPS*. As always, we'll tell you what's sweet about it and what sucks. Adam Mathew

They Say

"Lollipop Chainsaw will be a very precious and important title in a world market. It has a new heroine who supersedes the normal female video game characters"

We Say

Uh...maybe, and no.

Verdict



PSVITA.COM



Scan to see the traile



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I SEE THE PATH AHEAD.
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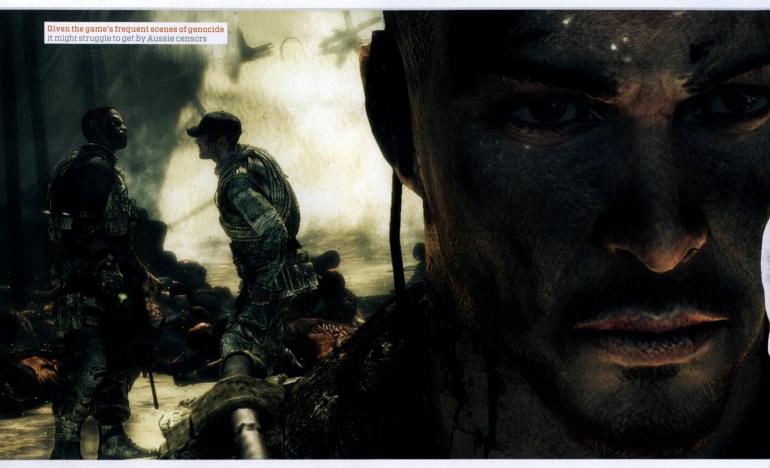












Spec Ops: The Line

2K Games asks you to draw a line in the sand

The Pitch

An exploration of the darker side of humanity within an action game

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
EXPECTED RELEASE:
TBA 2012
DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
GAMES
DEVELOPER: YAGER
DEVELOPER: 1-TBC

ame developers have gone all Hollywood in recent times, seemingly in response to a more mature gaming audience that is ready for grittier experiences. The same mysterious mojo that drove the likes of Casino Royale and The Dark Knight to inspire Tinsel Town has leaked into the gaming waterhole and is creating a movement towards believable jaw-dropping brutality: more psychological than anything else. Players are being asked how far they're willing to go, and if the direction Spec Ops: The Line is taking is anything to go by, we haven't even come close to hitting our collective limit... yet.



Fan-favourite voice actor Nolan North breathes life into the protagonist, Delta Force Captain Martin Walker, and his natural affinity for dropping f-bombs paves the way nicely for the kind of audience that 2K is gunning for. No, not that foulmouthed *CoD* player who you love to hate but, instead, the gamer who's willing to stare into the abyss and is okay with it staring back.

For the ninth instalment in the Spec Ops series, Yager Development has built its Line shrine on the pages of Joseph Conrad's novella Heart of Darkness (the same page-turner that inspired Apocalypse Now). Hell, they've even named the main murky bad guy, Colonel James Konrad, after the novella's author.

From the outset, it's clear that all is not well in the world of *The Line*. Walker is sent in with two wingmen —Lugo and Adams — to track down the whereabouts of AWOL Konrad in Dubai, the once great city that has been partially swallowed up by the desert. An inverted American flag greeted us at the foot of the city, standing as a clear sign that traditional western values should be shoved in a place where you don't

want sand to go.

The trio throw chat around as if they're three mates on a duck hunt and, while this sort of comedic camaraderie is par for the course in this genre, it works as an effective setup for how messy things are going to get before the credits roll. Compare it to the first half hour of your average horror — the initial setup that makes the audience like the characters who are destined to suffer — and you get the idea.

Initially, most of the suffering comes by way of the locals. Certain members of the 5,000 remaining (read: surviving) population have desperately taken up arms. Some are peons for the post-apocalyptic new world order that rules the city, while others still are trying to avoid the sandstorms and the various people vying for control of the city. It doesn't take long, though, for Walker and co to get slammed into the hurt locker. Welcome to the suck, indeed.

That amusing buddy banter that was flying thick and fast in the first two levels was seriously subdued by the fourth stage. By the time we finished missions seven and eight, all banter, all conversation, hell, all manner of shit had well and truly









"We want to peer into the abyss again and can hardly wait for it to peer right back"

gotten real. The characters were dirty, bloodied and we got a distinct feeling that we shouldn't expect them to be talking nice for the rest of the game.

It wasn't the sand-fuelled firefights that had us glued to the screen; it was the onscreen evidence of just how far down the amoral rabbit hole Walker will have to tumble before he can wave a bloodied and torn 'Mission Accomplished' banner.

Those who played through THQ's Homefront will recall one of the more confronting moments where an instance of white phosphorous friendly fire ends with a lot of felled buddies and a heartbroken teammate lamenting over the airwaves. The Line is set to seriously trump the hell out of it, with a similar but more powerful moment.

Yager Development takes that same mortar that launches skin-scorching white phosphorous death and puts the player in charge of it. But that's just the icing on the in-your-face cake. What makes things more confronting is that you've just been forced to walk through a section where the burning death has been launched at defenceless survivors. Walker has seen the grisly effects, and yet he has no qualms putting it to use.

A parachute-mounted camera is mortar-lobbed into the air, and you take control of a black & white screen that offers a view of the enemy encampment below. Every time a phosphorous-laden mortar round explodes, Walker's face is reflected on the monitor: it's like the AC-130 mission from *Modern Warfare* but with a sense of foreboding that you're going to have to march through the devastation you've just wrought.

And march through it we did, as still burning enemies crawled at us, begging for mercy, while Lugo and Adams started walking closer to the mutiny side of the insubordination line. Prior to this chilling demo finale, we'd already witnessed a player-choice moment, whereby we had to pick between rescuing civilians that Adam wanted to save or liberating Agent Gould who has valuable information. Tensions were high, and the oncecohesive unit was starting to come apart at the seams.

The visuals aren't exactly the best example of the Unreal Engine 3, and the gameplay will be familiar to anyone who's played a cover-based third-person shooter in the last few years. But what sets *The Line* apart for us was the unnerving feeling that despite a harrowing white phosphorous attack sequence, 2K had yet to show us the full darkness of *Spec Ops: The Line*. We want to peer into the abyss again and can hardly wait for it to peer right back.

Nathan Lawrence



Combat efficiency

We were impressed by the little touches to the gameplay that will hopefully be adopted by similar titles. Simple things such as having a separate vault button made it easier to pick when to stick to cover, when to move between it, and when to go over the top. Whenever you activate the secondary fire mode of a weapon, the game remembers your choice when switching between weapons. Near-miss grenades still stun enemies with kickedup sand, while issuing basic but meaningful orders to your team is as simple as tapping or holding a button. We felt in control at all times when the lead was flying thick and fast.

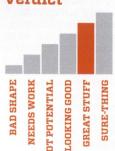
They Say

"A journey of these three men who find themselves in a bad situation"

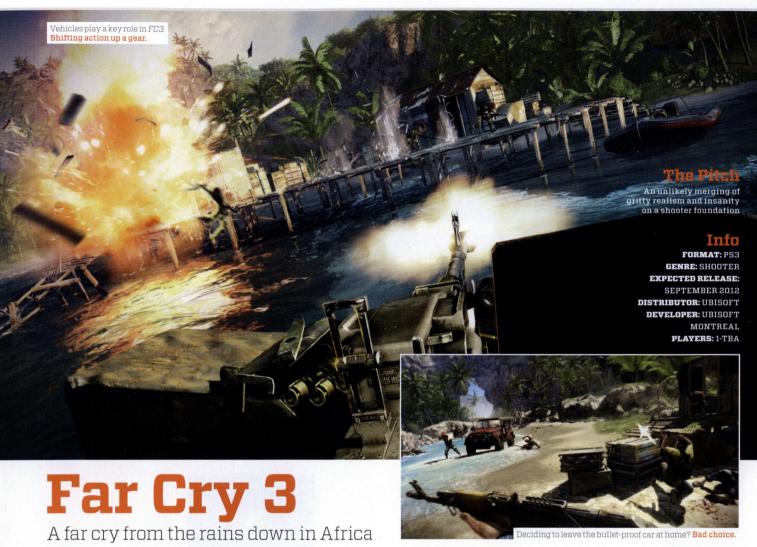
We Sav

A confronting experience that haunts us and makes us yearn for more

Verdict









Welcome (back) to the jungle

Fans of the series will know that the original Crytek-forged Far Cry was set on a beautiful tropical island, while the sequel was set in the desolate African wild. Ubisoft Montreal has picked the best of both worlds, taking a similar setting to the original game but losing the Hawaiian-shirt-loving protagonist in favour of the serious tone and engine of Far Cry 2. The mysterious fictional island of Far Cry 3 has us curious as to what secrets it holds. But at the end of the day, we're just glad that we won't have to be popping malaria pills every half hour.

or those people who found it difficult to look at the ocean in the same way after watching Jaws tear a beachside community a new one four times over, you may want to avoid the third Far Cry outing if you're hoping to ever go tropical again.

It seems that the beautiful fictitious atoll setting of Far Cry 3 is a ruse from very early on in the game, as leading everyman Jason Brody's tropical getaway takes a Dead Island turn when paradise goes to hell. No, there aren't zombies at play here, but there are plenty of metaphorical flesh-eating parasites on the island led by Vaas: a contender for baddest badass the gaming world has yet to see. At the very least, he's one of the craziest.

But he's not the only nut on this deadly island as, apparently, even the good guys are a few alcoholic shots shy of a Long Island Iced Tea. The friendly local GP, Dr Earnhardt, paints his house daily, sends Brody on magic mushroom fetch quests and frequents his own stock of mindaltering drugs.

Almost everything about the island is deadly: pirates, shark-infested waters and nasty wildlife. But being cut of the Far Cry cloth, players can expect to take on the island in their own way. Stick to the main quest and save your travel buddies from the maniacal Vaas, or take a bushwhacking route and explore the mysterious island.

This mentality carries over to the combat, too, as Ubisoft is hell bent on empowering the player to choose their own tact. Go in loud, slit enemies' throats, or avoid fights entirely. With a variety of vehicles, zip-lines and entry points to the various island locales, you can stand back and plot out your attack or react dynamically to whatever the game throws at you.

The team has worked hard to ensure that Far Cry is true to its core and is, at its heart, a shooter experience. Gunfire sounds like the real deal, while the inclusion of a slide and cover system gives you the option of playing real-time chess with the game's enemies, and thinking on the fly while the bullets are flying thick and fast.

Better yet, Ubisoft Montreal isn't afraid to mess with the formula, either. A frontal assault on a beached vessel gave way to a combat-less psychedelic fetch quest that paved the way for a high-seas boat infiltration. Variety like this keeps the game fresh. Bottom line: Ubisoft's hands-off presentation of Far Cry 3 is tonally a far cry from the action-heavy gameplay shown last year at E3. There's simply no denying that Ubisoft Montreal is taking risks with an established IP, and if they can successfully walk the line of gritty realism and mind-blowing insanity, we welcome the final results.

They Say

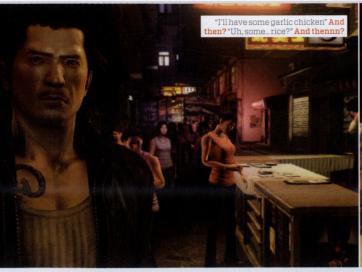
"[We knew] we wanted Far Cry 3 to be emotional and raw."

We Say

A shooter that rewards variety, encourages insanity and is hellbent on breaking the protagonist before the credits roll. We're in...

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING





Sleeping Dogs

You're on the menu in Hong Kong

e were only just starting to like True Crime: Hong Kong, when all of a sudden it was kneecapped and left to die by a remorseless Activision. Why they did it was always a bit of a mystery. Perhaps the title just caught a stray round during the housecleaning period when the Guitar Hero series got axed. Maybe early focus groups who saw it hated the human-on-human violence, or the cockfighting, and cried "fowl play".

Whatever the case, we'll be cockblocked no longer. Square Enix has decided to throw United Front Games a lifeline with its London studio claiming that they "loved the product they saw" - even if licensing issues would prevent them from using the True Crime moniker.

Hence, Sleeping Dogs is now a thing. It's still an open-world, action thriller which puts players in the role of a police officer Detective Wei Shen who, by pure coincidence, engages in crime of a true nature. Just like before, he's on an undercover quest to topple the Triads quicker than a cheap tripod, providing he can balance the morality of being a cop and a crim.

UFG are a talented team and the fact that they've had an extended period of time to polish this bodes well. The team is quick to remind us that hand-to-hand combat is a major focus of the game, unlike most sandbox games where it's an afterthought. Along with the bunches of punches you'll bestow, the driving segments should utilise the team's past experience with ModNation Racers. We expect it'll handle looser than the action we're hoping to see in the stripper districts. Lastly, the story will have Chinese-flavoured underworld drama and intrigue that's set to make players take away sweet and sour memories.

The updated footage we've been privy to shows us very stylised fight scenes set against an amazing sandbox city. We're looking at a visual approach that is part John Woo Asian action cinema, part Zach Snyder, part kick-arse 1980s cop movies.

Sleeping Dogs is going to need to nail every trick it knows to run with the big dogs. If UFG has used the 'off-season' wisely and Square Enix picks the right launch window, there could well be an audience for this. Adam Mathew

They Say

"[We have] one of the best melee combat systems out there. Add in the vibrant backdrop of the Hong Kong underworld and we get a fiery recipe with fun written all over it."

We Say

We'll take a large portion to go, thanks. Don't forget to add in some 'kung pow'chickens. too.

Verdict



The Pitch Grand Theft Rickshaw:

Hong Kong?

Info

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: ACTION DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS DEVELOPER: UNITED FRONT GAMES PLAYERS: 1 - TBA RELEASE: TBA 2012







The can't rightly recall any correlation between the game called *Borderlands* and the word 'plot'.

We do remember it featuring many burial plots; we planted six wards worth of psycho midgets underground. We also have memories of self-made murder plots (designed to shaft co-op buddies in duels rigged heavily in our favour). Anything beyond that? Not so much.

It's been reiterated to us that story is getting a big emphasis in this shootacular sequel. Brick, Lilith, Mordecai and Roland are back onboard, though they're in a non-player capacity. Apparently, they'll advise you much like the Guardian Angel did in *Borderlands* (through an overlay of some live-action actor looking at you imploringly).

Gearbox is still dedicated to letting us "be and act" how we want in this adventure; the tale they want to weave is really a retroactive story that fleshes out the four original protagonists. God only knows how much character depth they'll go into about the new awesome foursome — a Gunzerker, a blue-haired siren, an Assassin and a Commando.

We do however know that the end-game is much more focused this time. Your antagonist is Handsome Jack; owner/operator of Hyperion guns and mini-dictator of all he surveys. This reprobate is making it his business to murder any Vault Hunters who are trying to beat him

at finding an ancient alien creature called The Warrior, a WMD planetconquering beast.

Borderlands 2 will still use the procedural content creation system to generate random firearms, but this time every gun will have a unique "feel" to it, too. These will be recognisable quirks relating to the different build processes of a weapon manufacturer. This should make for weapons you'll fall in love with (and call 'Gladys'), or ones that you'll find shitty and attempt to offload onto your co-op mates.

Clearly Gearbox is still very much committed to the winning formula of *Borderlands* (plenty of shooty and much booty looty), but they're aiming to deliver it in a much slicker way. The fairly static environs, for example, will now be a good deal more diverse and lively than the dustbowls and rustbelt towns of the original adventure.

In short, while we've all been grinding through the *Borderlands* and its DLC, Gearbox has been levelling up a sequel worthy of our salivation. • Adam Mathew



They Say

The Pitch

ore fun and a plot

GENRE: SHOOTER

PLAYERS: 1-4

DISTRIBUT

DEVELOPER: GEARBOX

RELEASE: SEP 2012

Info

MAT: PS3

"While you're grinding we want you to care about the whys and wherefores of [Pandora]."

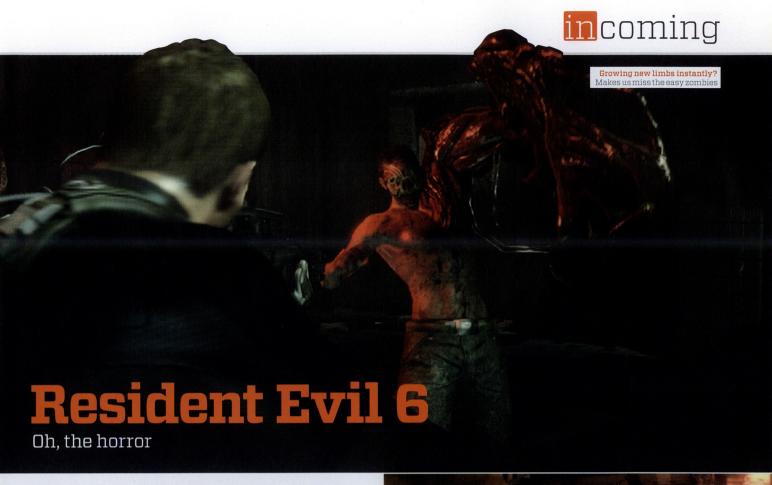
We Say

Plot? Sure. Yeah, wedge it in. But also put in a mini-gun that fires armour-piercing nitro-glycerine-tipped bullets, please.



NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF

BAD SHAPE



here's a mental barrier in picking up a game that's up to its sixth iteration (racers and fighting games excluded) for people who haven't been following a series, especially a series with a convoluted plot and a cast of constantly returning characters. However, Resident Evil 6 is re-inventing itself – or perhaps more accurately, injecting some form of mutating virus and learning to adapt.

There are a few big changes, but the biggest and most important is that, finally, finally, the controls now allow you to move and shoot at the same time. Slides, multidirection rolls and better melee attacks are also on the acrobatic roster. Of course, Resi has dabbled with true action-game manoeuvres in the past, notably Jill's dodge and roll in Resident Evil 3, whilst Leon, Chris and Sheeva all had melee attacks in 4 and 5. Plus, with Operation Raccoon City (see page 62) installing genre-standard controls it'd feel like a stubborn step backwards to be rooted to the snot to have to shoot

You'll need to be as nimble as possible, as the new enemies, named J'avo, are a formidable threat. They'll work together to

attack you from all sides, running, jumping and wielding weapons as they come at most terrifying is the way they mutate as

Take off a J'avo's limb and it'll grow back, potentially stronger than it was before. Hiding behind cover will protect you for only as long as it takes for a new J'avo tentacle to rocket over or around the bit of masonry you're clinging to. Scant ammo means you'll have to pinpoint your attacks, else risk becoming a humanshaped lump in a repulsive tendril.

Also confirmed is that the game takes place in 2013, four years after RE5, and the still unnamed new protagonist is in Eastern Europe. Those following the series will recall that Leon Kennedy's adventures in RE4's rural European village ended with Ada Wong getting on a chopper with a virus sample. Has it spread? Throw in the Chinese city of Lanshiang and America's Tall Oaks, and we have a global threat. We want this. Now. - Paul Taylor

They Say "Resident Evil 6 sees "Put you hand up if you like bullets." Blam series favourites Leon S. Kennedy and

you. We've seen similar tactics before, but you shoot parts of their body.

Verdict

things.

We Sav

After the exciting

Chris Redfield come

together to face this

unprecedented threat."

Resident Evil 4 and the

so-so Resident Evil 5,

part 6 promises great

BAD SHAPE LOOKING GOOD GREAT STUFF

The Pitch Worldwide zombie bash

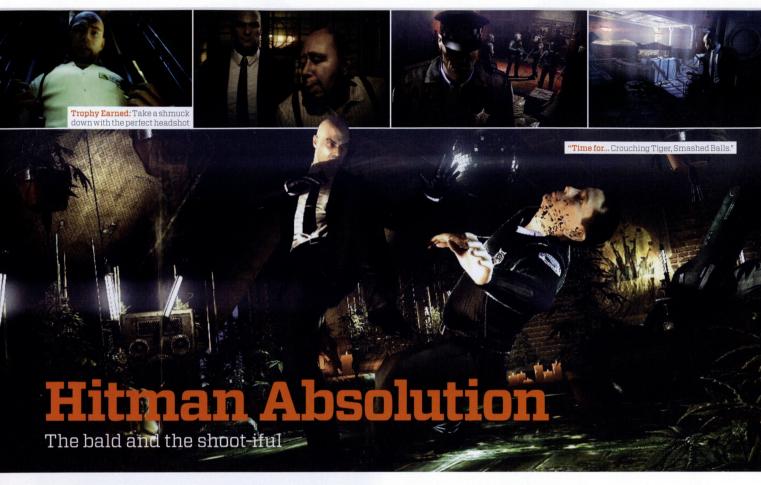
with improved controls

Info FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: ACTION

TBC NOV DISTRIBUTOR: THQ DEVELOPER: CAPCOM PLAYERS: 1 - TBC

EXPECTED RELEASE:





The Pitch

The original assassin returns with his own special creed.

Info

There's stalking your prey and then there's stalking your prey

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: ACTION EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA 2012 DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO-BANDAI PARTNERS DEVELOPER: SQUARE-ENIX PLAYERS: 1

peak to hardcore Hitman fans and they'll tell you that the series has the essence of gaming's holy grail: freedom. You have freedom in the way you tackle an objective (hint: kill someone without being seen) from the path you take - be it the most direct with pistol in hand or skirting around the outside - to the methods and level of violence in between. It really is up to you how you want to play.

Absolution wants to give you choices, and it's going to be both a smoother and tougher experience to blend in to your surroundings as you take control of Agent 47. It's still possible (and a wise idea) to incapacitate a guard and nick his clothes, though agent 47, with his stature and shiny dome, has rather distinguishing features. Stroll into a room full of goons wearing 'borrowed' clobber and they'll be suspicious as they get close to you.

You need to blend in, and there are a couple ways of doing that. If you've seen last year's E3 demo where 47, dressed as a cop, picks up a doughnut instead of a

gun, you've seen one way already. Each level has an object you can use to dull someone's suspicion (see the doughnut example), but 47's new 'Instinct' ability gives you the chance to hide in plain sight.

"Instinct is an umbrella feature that covers many mechanics," said Tore Blystad, Absolution's game director. "When used with disguises the player can use his Instinct powers to blend in and fool nearby suspicious NPC's. Disguise is a central mechanic of any Hitman game and something we always wanted to take a step further."

So, if you're about to be sprung you can use your Instinct to time a yawn, or scratch your face, or something else, to distract whoever's giving you the evil eye. It's seems a little odd to us, being more of a stopgap rather than a serious option and we're not sure just how organic it'll be. The cost of these actions also sap your Instinct meter, and there are more entertaining and useful ways to use this new feature.

Instinct can be used to anticipate the path that guards are going to take, and it's marked out by a fiery trail that maps

Challenge: accepted. 🚣 Paul Taylor

They Say

"It has been a great challenge for the team to come up with a design for Hitman: Absolution that is both true to its legacy and feeling like a modern, more cinematic game."

We Sav

There's a glut of options for taking the bad guys down from the sneaky to the overtly violent. And, with loads of options to get to the goal it promises loads of opportunity to play through again and again.

> COOKING GOOD GREAT STUFF SURE-THING



ALSO INBOUND



Sorcerv

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: ACTION EXPECTED RELEASE: MAY 2012 DISTRIBUTOR: SONY DEVELOPER: SONY PLAYERS: 1

You shall not pass (your Move controller), as this looks really good. Sorcery will put the wand in your hand, letting you conjure and command powerful skills in a world of magic and wonder steeped in Irish folklore tradition. We truly hope this means 'drinking' and 'fighting with shillelaghs', but it's unconfirmed.

Instead, we'll have to make do with 12 upgradeable spells, hundreds of unique potions and countless items to discover. Our instincts are telling us that this is going to be one Move game worth owning. And that's rare.



Enemy Front

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: SHOOTER EXPECTED RELEASE: JUNE 2012 DISTRIBUTOR: TBA DEVELOPER: CITY INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1-TBA

According to City Interactive's official description Enemy Front is "the realistic tale of a hardened soldier dropped behind Nazi lines to engage in dynamic, diversified missions ranging from quick skirmishes, espionage assignments, and sabotage activities".

Three things interest us about this. One, we always loved espionage in our shooters (see: the early Medal of Honor games). Two, it'll run on the Crytek 3 engine. And three, Stuart Black (who left Codemasters before the hideous Bodycount was released) is in charge. Hmmm.



The Walking Dead

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: ADVENTURE EXPECTED RELEASE: JULY 2012 DISTRIBUTOR: TBA DEVELOPER: TELLTALE GAMES PLAYERS: 1

Anybody dving for quality TV will have no doubt discovered the American series The Walking Dead. The good news: the talented group behind the Back To The Future game is handling this adventure spin-off.

The first episode will take place at the outset of the zombie apocalypse when Rick Grimes is still in a coma, and focuses on an all new set of survivors (because licensing actor voices is expensive). Better yet, it'll offer 'full character control', unlike the quick-time farm that was Jurassic Park: The Game.

MUD – FIM Motocross World Championship

It's time to watch some utter filth



The Pitch

Arcade racing with crusty, demonic speed

Info

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: BACING EXPECTED RELEASE: MARCH 2012 DISTRIBUTOR: TRA DEVELOPER: BLACK BEAN PLAYERS: 1 - 16

eveloper Black Bean has quite the pedigree for delivering quality racing titles of the both the four and two wheeled persuasion. It would therefore be a mistake to prejudge their latest game, MUD, as a watered-down DiRT (with motorbikes).

The first big difference: this is an arcade racer, not a sim. The jumps are extra high, speed boosts are dispensed by a flashing bar that features an energy drink, and the approachable handling model offers aceelerator, brake and 'scrub'. The latter is an advanced motocross move where you shoot off a jump and kick your bike to the side, in

order to earn a speed boost.

Curiously, the scrub is your only trick in the campaign mode which has you levelling up the skills of three riders in a quasi-RPG fashion. Little is known about how this will actually work, but we do know these characters will compete in the MX1, MX2 and FIM Motocross of Nations leagues.

Those hoping to bust out some stunts should know that MUD will come with a separate trick mode set across three dedicated arenas. Only time will tell if the segregation of the tricks system from the racing proves to be a good idea. We have our doubts. Adam Mathew

They Say
"[MUD] features fully deformable terrain conditions, a realistic MX handling model and much more"

We Sav

The game's take on racing has potential, but it still needs to be cleaned up.





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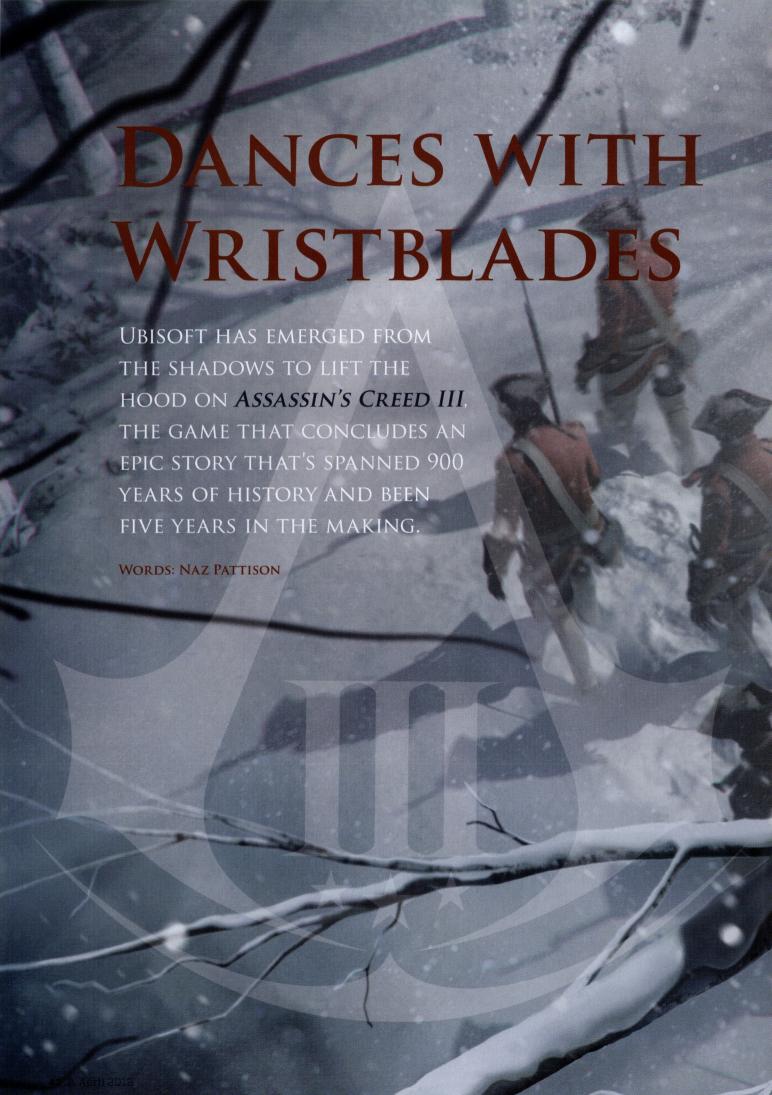


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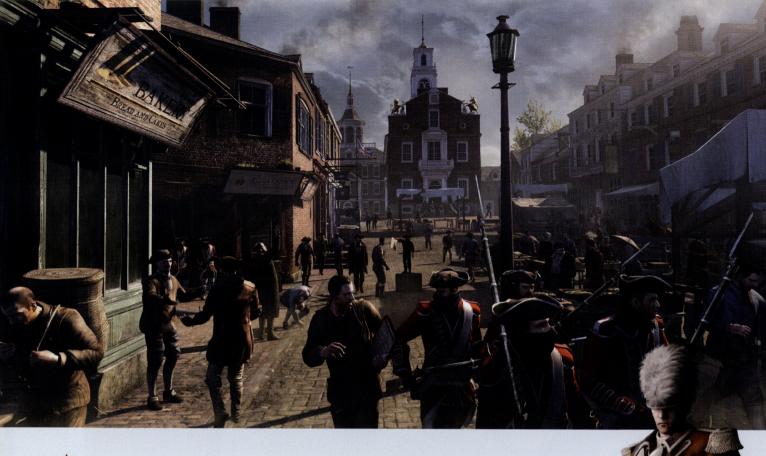
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ssassin's Creed III puts you in the boots of Connor, a hunter fighting for justice amidst the 18th century American Revolution. We're really excited about ACIII's setting because it's an era that's filled with explosive conflict, has yet to be really explored by videogames, and is fittingly apt for the showdown between the Assassins and their foes the Templars. Just as the Americans are the underdogs fighting for independence from the British Empire, so too are the Assassins on the back foot, fighting back from extinction against the Templars.

TALKIN' 'BOUT A REVOLUTION

Before we dive into the meat of *ACIII*, let's talk history. If you paid as much attention in history class as we did then this likely sums up your understanding of America's revolution: "*Independence Day*? That's when the aliens invaded and Will Smith kicked their arse, right? George Washington? He's the dollar bill guy, yeah?" Luckily for you we consulted the world's library, Wikipedia, and did your homework for you. Check out the summary in the next paragraph, and also our American Revolution 101 section below, to get up to speed on *ACIII*'s historical setting.

America's Revolution, the short version: way before Americans were famous for cheeseburgers, movie star politicians and being the world's bully, they did some pretty amazing things in the 18th century to overthrow the British rule and create their independent nation. The American Revolution isn't only relevant to Americans either. It's primarily a struggle involving the 13 American colonies banding together to fight British rule and assert their right to declare independence and create the United States. However, it was a conflict that sent shockwaves through the entire British Empire, and was often described as a civil war fought on foreign soil. France's involvement in America's war would ultimately lead to its own successful revolution against the British as well.

Okay, so now you've done your background check and you're ready to dish out some justice against America's over-taxing, sissy redcoat-wearing, British imperial overlords? Good. Let's move on.

Assassin's Creed III centres on the story of Connor, and how his tale relates to the broader American Revolution. "Our story is an epic tale that crosses 30 years, from 1753 to 1783, beginning before the revolution kicks off, proceeding through its key events and finishing after the surrender of the British," explained creative

AMERICAN REVOLUTION 101

Assassin's Creed III takes place between 1753-1783, so we've summarized 30 years of America's explosive battle for independence from British rule in one handy timeline.



1753 – Benjamin Franklin continues to agitate for America's independent rights. A year earlier his lighting-struck kite experiment kick-started humanity's understanding of electricity. He was kind of a big deal.



1754 – The French and Indian War begins. French and British troops fought each other across North America, with the Native Indians caught in the middle. This will be a big focus for *ACIII* as we know Connor's village is burned by British troops.



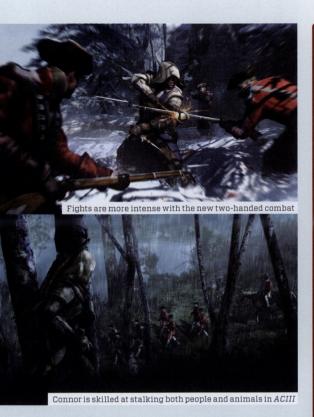
1763 – France gets slapped down and has to sign over its American territories to the British with the Treaty of Paris. They may go quietly into the night in 1763 but the Frenchies will get their revenge eventually.



1763 – Pontiac's Rebellion begins (and no, it's not about people who really hate the cars). The Native Americans who were previously allied with France begin fighting the British themselves.



1764 – The Sugar Act is the first of many taxes England imposes on America. Turns out the Yanks hate being taxed by foreigners. These taxes are ultimately the catalyst for their war of independence.



director, Alex Hutchinson. "We have an opportunity to include more historical events than ever before, with the player visiting Valley Forge, getting involved in key battles such as Bunker Hill and even becoming entangled in Paul Revere's midnight ride."

Some of the revolution battles that occur in ACIII are absolutely monstrous in scale. We also know that the new version of the Anvil graphics engine that Ubisoft is using to power ACIII is capable of displaying thousands of people on-screen. So, we can safely assume you'll witness some truly jaw-dropping battles. However, while Ubisoft has confirmed Connor will be at many epic battles, he has his own Assassin agenda, so don't expect him to be personally charging across the battlefield.

ACIII is really a tale of two conflicts, because in parallel to the American conflict, the ongoing battle between the Assassins and their foes the Templars plays a central role in the game. Hutchinson paints some more detail for us, "The Assassins have been in America for many years, watching over the Colonies unchallenged from the days of Columbus. But over time they grew complacent and by 1765 the Templars have all but wiped out the Assassins in the Colonies. While the Assassin's cling to existence, the Templars pursue their other goal, to seek out an ancient

"WE'RE REALLY EXCITED ABOUT ACIII'S SETTING BECAUSE IT'S AN ERA THAT'S... YET TO BE REALLY **EXPLORED BY VIDEOGAMES"**

THE STORY SO FAR...

GET YOURSELF UP TO SPEED ON THE EXISTING HEROES OF ASSASSIN'S CREED: ALTAIR, EZIO AND DESMOND.





ASSASSIN'S CREED

plight to regain his honour within the

ASSASSIN'S CREED II

da Vinci and a cast of memorable







SSASSIN'S CREED: BROTHERHOOD







1766 – In an attempt to end protests against its taxes, the Brits pass the Declaratory Act, essentially saying, "You will pay our taxes, or else. Bitches!"



1770 - Boston Massacre. The British tell the Yanks to stop complaining about taxes, killing five unarmed civilians in the process.



1772 – Samuel Adams. Before he was famous for being a brand of beer, he was pivotal in creating the Committees of Correspondence, which enabled Patriots across the 13 American colonies to band together to fight British rule. Cool guy.



1772 – The Watauga Association. The colony of Tennessee tells the Brits to get stuffed and declares its independence.



1773 – Boston Tea Party. American colonists didn't like the taste of British taxes on tea, so they burnt down a few boatloads and then tossed them into the harbour.



1774 – Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers, and all-round-legend, is questioned in London by Parliament about the independence movement.



1775 – Paul Revere's Midnight Ride. He was a Patriot who rode all night to alert the American Colonials of British troop movements ahead of the first major conflicts of the war.



1775 – The American Revolutionary War begins, with the Battles of Lexington and Concord. Continued tensions over unfair taxes lead members of the 13 American colonies to attack the British troops.



been painted with a broader palette of emotions, leading him to fight injustice. Hutchinson elaborates on *ACIII*'s protagonist, "With Connor we wanted to create a new and unique hero who was clearly different from previous Assassins and hopefully from most other videogame protagonists. Connor is a man driven by a strong desire to do what's right. He fights injustice wherever he sees it, whether it's in the oppression of his people, or the British rule of the colonists, or the threat of the Templars. The story of how he moves from a child born in a Mohawk village to someone who is pushed to join the Assassins and eventually become involved in the revolution is the core of the game."

As well as his character motivations, Connor's Mohawk background has some big impacts on how he moves about and approaches combat. Connor has spent most of his time in forests, tracking and hunting. This means he's no stranger to moving quickly and stealthily through the wilderness. Hutchinson explained how the team wanted Connor to be "as comfortable climbing cliffs and moving through trees, fighting on uneven terrain and hiding in forests, as Altair and Ezio were comfortable in cities. While

many games have built forests, we want to show people that forests can be fully realized gameplay environments and not just obstacles to avoid."

With 30 per cent of missions taking place in forests, you can bet you'll be bounding across boulders and tree trunks and hand-over-handing through branches like a turbo-charged Tarzan, except with a lot less chest beating and a lot more stabbing.

People won't be the only prey you stalk in forests either. Ubisoft has confirmed animals will appear and your ability to track, hunt and skin them, will play a role in ACIII. "We consider the animals in the frontier to be the frontier's new crowd. Animals will have specific behaviour and sets of animations in relation to their species." Hutchinson mentioned. Offering a hint of just deep this hunting element will be, we know the condition of the animal skin impacts how much you can sell it for. Fire enough arrows into a bear for it to pass as an echidna and you'll barely be able to sell its pelt for a profit.

The changing seasons in ACIII represent far more than a trivial texture change as well. Hutchinson told us why Ubisoft put a lot of attention into the weather. "Weather is

IT'S BIG, REALLY BIG

Featuring huge recreations of both 18th century versions of New York and Boston, as well as the wild frontier countryside, ACIII's map is immense. It's essentially a condensed version of the American North East. In the frontier countryside (itself 1.5 times the size ACB's Rome) you'll also encounter locations like Valley Forge, the small townships of Lexington and Concord, as well as Connor's village.



1775 – Battle for Bunker Hill. The Patriots learned the British were planning to expand their occupation from Boston, out into the surrounding lands. After prolonged fighting at Bunker Hill, the American Patriots eventually had to retreat but not until they'd exacted heavy loses on the British troops.



1776 – Declaration of Independence. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and other representatives of America's colonies form the Continental Congress and sign the famous Declaration of Independence, formally telling the British they reject its claim to America.

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

A DECLARATION

BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.



REVOLUTIONARY FILMS

GET INTO THE MOOD FOR ACIII WITH SOME OF THE FILMS THAT INSPIRED IT.



THE PATRIOT

Mel Gibson reprises his vengeful one-man-army role from *Braveheart*, trading the blue face paint for an American flag. *The Patriot* is set in 1776, smack-bang in the middle of *ACIII*'s revolution period. This is a great revenge flick, with Gibson at his raging, redcoat-slaughtering best, playing the American vigilante, nicknamed The Ghost. Mad Mel's never had a problem playing angry.

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS

Set in 1757, just a few years after ACIII's events begin, the British and French are battling for control of the North American colonies. Amidst the brutal warfare, an American settler adopted by the Mohicans fights against all odds to keep the daughter of a British officer alive. Daniel "I can method-act all Day" Lewis famously vows, "No matter how long it takes, no matter how far, I will find you." Clearly he wasn't talking about his shirt.



THE CROSSING

Jeff Daniels plays George Washington, leading his army into the historic Battle of Trenton. You might have trouble tracking down a copy of this 2000 made-for-TV flick but it's worth watching for Daniels' performance as one of America's most celebrated heroes. The 1976 Battle of Trenton features prominently in ACIII, so it's ideal American Revolution homework for the game.

NATIONAL TREASURE 2

No, we're not joking. Well, not completely anyway. Sure, the time period is off but it does deal with Templars (main adversaries of the Assassins) and it involves American conspiracies spanning multiple time periods, from Lincoln's assassination to present day. Plus most American Revolution flicks are depressing, so you'll want something upbeat.



"Sorry, we're not letting Assassins in to kill us today"

"THEY ALSO SET THEMSELVES THE LOFTY GOAL OF CREATING VISUALS THAT LOOK NEXT-GEN ON CURRENT-GEN"

more than art for us: preparing for winter was a challenge for people in the 18th century, and wasn't something we could ignore in this setting. Each of our maps have both winter and summer versions which will push the player to change their strategy, climbing trees to avoid being slowed by snow on the ground, or hunting enemies who are struggling to navigate through the frozen forest."

Tracking the paths left by your enemies in the snow is also confirmed to play a role in the game.

For ACIII's combat Ubisoft has built it from the ground up to be faster and more challenging, taking cues from Connor's predatory speed and movement. The new two-handed combat system sees him constantly in motion as he slips in and around enemy attacks and retaliates with lithe combos and counters, weaving in his tomahawk, knife and Assassin's blade attacks. It's his ferocious speed that will be the biggest game changer though. Hutchinson explains how they've made the combat more "fluid than ever: Connor can perform what we call running assassinations, where he can assassinate people in full sprint without losing speed." The previous AC games have been the benchmark against which others are measured when it comes to fluid in-game combat and executions, so we can't wait to witness the new running assassinations in action.



1776 – The Great
Fire of New York. During
conflicts between the
British occupation and
American rebels, a
devastating fire ravages
the city, but it's not clear
which side started it.



1776 – Battle of Trenton. General George Washington leads his army across the frozen Delaware river and catches the Hessian mercenaries (fighting for the British) literally sleeping at their posts. This battle is seen as the turning point that provides the needed momentum for the Americans to ultimately win the war.



 $1778\,\text{--}$ Treaty of Alliance sees French formally join the war with America against the British. They may have been defeated originally but the American Revolution would give the French the opportunity they needed to progress towards their own independence from England two decades later.



1780 – Battle of Kings Mountain. American Patriots win a decisive victory against the Brits, who are now firmly on the back foot.



The previous AC games have copped some criticism for not packing enough challenge into the combat, especially in Brotherhood, but Ubisoft has made some serious changes to increase its difficulty. As well as significantly smarter and more aggressive Al, the health units have been abandoned in favour of regenerating health that forces you to escape and rest when your energy is dangerously low.

WRAPPING THINGS UP

If you've played the previous AC games you'll know about Desmond. He's a descendent of Altair, Ezio and Connor, reliving their struggles in 2012 via a computer called the Animus. Over the past four games Desmond has not only discovered details of the Assassin's nine-century long struggle against the Templars but he's also unearthed an understanding of a civilization that predates humans. This race was wiped off the face of the planet by a solar flare, and here's the kicker, the next flare is due to strike in 2012.

To prevent this catastrophe, Desmond will get to

embark on his own present-day assassination missions. We know absolutely zero about these present-day missions, but the thought of *AC* gameplay incorporating modern weapons like silenced pistols and sniper rifles, rocks our world. You also have to admire the planning and precision that's gone into Ubisoft's creation of five games alongside a five-year story arc that sees the franchise neatly conclude its once-futuristic 2012 setting in the same year the game's released in.

The ACIII team began work on the game more than two years ago, as soon as ACII was completed. The team was determined to make a sequel that delivers a host of new elements, while remaining true to what people love about the originals. They also set themselves the lofty goal of creating visuals that look next-gen on currentgen. With many months left to refine the game before its October release, the team appears to be well and truly on-track to deliver on its goals and create not only the best Assassin's Creed game, but also one of the PS3's most memorable experiences yet.



1781 – The 13 colonies ratify the Articles of Confederation (a document that would ultimately be turned into the U.S. Constitution), establishing themselves as sovereign states with their own government.



1781 – The Americans crush the last British forces at the Battle of Cowpens, forcing the Brits to formerly surrender at Yorktown.



1783 – The second Treaty of Paris is signed, with the British formerly recognizing America's independence and ending the American Revolutionary War. Boom.

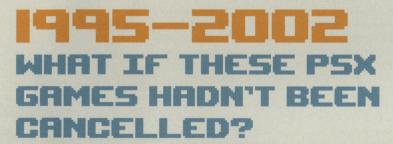
WHAT IF...

TAKE A TOUR WITH US THROUGH THE COBWEB-FILLED
BRSEMENT OF PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE'S MUSEUM OF
CANCELLED PLAYSTATION PROJECTS, AS WE ASK, "WHAT
WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THESE ABORTED EXPERIMENTS
WERE ACTUALLY RELEASED INTO THE WILD?"

WORDS: NAZ PATTISON

e've always had a fascination with theorizing about "what if..." scenarios. From the world-changing, "what if you could murder Hitler before he came to power?" to the curious, "what if Tom Selleck hadn't turned down the Indiana Jones role?" to the ultimate question that continues to vex the world's greatest philosophers, "what if you had to choose whether to spend the rest of your life with one giant testicle or 17 regular sized ones?"

There are hundreds of instances in PlayStation's history where a decision playing out differently would have rocked the gaming landscape. The PlayStation as we know it was originally birthed from a desire to crush Nintendo. Sony and Nintendo tried partnering on creating a CD-drive for the Super Nintendo console but Nintendo foolishly snubbed Sony and partnered instead with Phillips on the CD-drive; and in so doing Nintendo created its biggest rival. Sony was so angered by the snub, it created the PlayStation to compete directly with the Nintendo 64. What if Nintendo hadn't refused to work with Sony? We're glad we never had to find out the answer to that question.



Okay, so 3D was only taking its first lurching steps when the PSX hit the scene in 1995, but even in this infant state it was the polygonal petri dish in which a huge number of legendary gaming franchises were born. Kojima's original Metal Gear Solid invented the stealth genre and redefined story-telling in games. Gran Turismo, Resident Evil and Tomb Raider are just a few of the classics that began on PSX. But what about the ones that never made it?



DARK GUNS

The brainchild of Twisted Metal guru David Jaffe was birthed when Sony gave him a \$2M cheque in 1997 and let him make whatever game he wanted. Dark Guns let you control a UFO and use it to blast cities and abduct humans. It sounds very similar to Destroy All Humans! (pictured) but a bloated design document, lack of direction and general mismanagement prevented it from coming together.

What if it was released?

Let's be honest, it would probably have sucked. Jaffe was right to pull the plug.

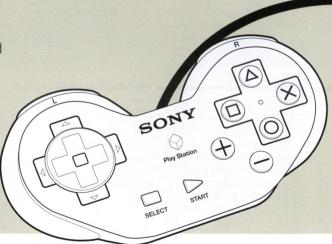


THE GETAWAY

If there's one developer who's famous for taking his time, it's Brendan McNamara. Before his oft-delayed and controversially produced *L.A. Noire*, McNamara developed *The Getaway*. Not much was released to the public of the PSX version other than a handful of blurry images.

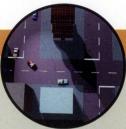
What if it was released?

The PS2 original was ridiculously good looking but we're relieved the PSX game was canned. It clearly needed more time in the oven.



*The answer is, of course, one giant testicle. If you're going to do something, do it properly. Sack up and be the bigger man











KILLZONE

The Killzone games look incredible. They regularly have bare-knuckle brawls with the Uncharted games for Best PS3 Graphics Ever bragging rights. Before development was shifted to the PS2 game we know today, work had progressed significantly on an earlier PSX original.

What if it was released?

It's tempting to imagine what the original PSX game would have been like but we suspect this is a door best left closed. Given it took them five years to make the PS2 original, that means the PSX project wouldn't have been released until 2002 or 2003, by which point it would be hideously dated. Not cool.

RACE'N' CHASE

The recently released design documents from the original *Grand Theft Auto* revealed the game began development as *Race'n'Chase*. Unlike *GTA*'s crime focus, *Race'n'Chase* was built around multiplayer racing, however the top-down, open-world elements were shared.

What if it was released?

Let us answer that with another question. Was canceling *Race'n'Chase* in favour of a crime game called *GTA* a smart idea? It was arguably the smartest call in videogames history.

We'd call that a big YES!

BALDUR'S

We all remember the legendary PS2 game Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance. It was a goblinhacking, magic-hurling, gold-collecting, armourupgrading orgy of RPG goodness, and we'd be unlikely to have games like Skyrim without it. The original Baldur's Gate was actually finished and due to be released in 2000. We don't know why it was cancelled but we sure wish it hadn't been.

What if it was released?

We would have gotten a piece of the brilliant franchise a generation earlier. Yes, please.

FALLOUT

Ah, imagine how the PSX line-up would have been altered if one of gaming's greatest franchises had opened up the vault to its post-apocalyptic wasteland two PlayStation generations earlier? Although the original Fallout's overhead view looks very different to the shooter we know today, the turn-based combat and multiple solutions to puzzles were clearly established.

What if it was released?

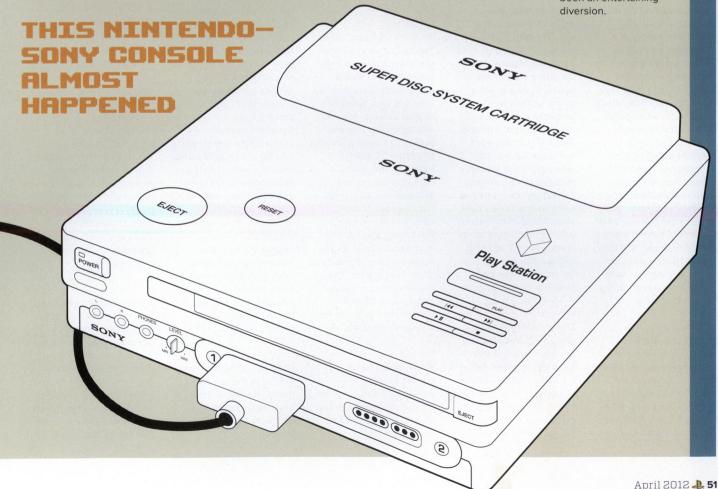
Having Fallout on
PlayStation a decade
earlier would not only
have made gamers
happy it would have
made the franchise a lot
more famous. Would we
have seen a Fallout film
by now? Very likely.

STARSHIP TROOPERS

Starship Troopers is stupid. Stupidly, stupidly awesome. Sure there was the decidedly crap PC version of Starship Troopers (pictured) in 2005 but before that there were both PSX and PS2 versions of the game in production. Would we like to know more? You bet we would. Polygonal soldiers being torn into chunks by killer bugs always makes for good entertainment. We bet one of those dastardly mind-controlling bugs is behind the cancellation. Damn you bugs!

What if it was released?

Given the developer's pedigree the *Starship Troopers* game wouldn't have had a huge impact on shooters as a whole but it would have been an entertaining



2000-2009 WHAT IF THESE PS2 GAMES HADN'T BEEN CANCELLED?

Most of us will fondly remember the PS2 for its awesome DVD drive (who didn't buy a copy of *The Matrix*?) and its huge collection of classic games. Who could forget the first time they booted up *GTA*: *San Andreas* and pedalled around Los Santos? Or when you had to madly run for your life from the sack-wearing, chainsaw-carving psychopath in *Resident Evil 4*? But what if you had a chance to play some of the PS2 games that were never released? Let's take a browse through them and find out.



TAXI DRIVER

This license had a hell of a lot going for it. Taxi Driver's story of a demented Vietnam vet (Robert De Niro) on a rampage through the streets of 1976 New York is a legendary flick, simply begging for videogame justice. Scarface and The Thing had also established aging film licenses can make killer games. Apparently the warehouses filled with Majesco's un-sold copies of Jaws didn't leave it with much coin to fund the rest of its projects. If they landfill those games we doubt anyone will drive out into the desert to dia them up ET-style.

What if it was released?

Let's face it, with Majesco's track record this game was more likely than not to tarnish the *Taxi Driver* name and our fond memories, so it's a blessing the project was permanently parked.



THE THING 2

20 years after the legendary horror film was released The Thing landed on PS2, and it was good; really good. Rare is the aging film license that results in an awesome game, so fans were understandably giddy at the prospect of a sequel. The Thing 2 ratcheted the action up a notch with even more insanely mutated monstrosities. Thankfully the game has lived on in a sense, with sketches of its monsters influencing the creatures in last year's The Thing remake film. It's a shame the new film was an absolute stinker though.

What if it was released?

There's every indication The Thing 2 would have been even better than the original game, plus it would have resolved the cliffhanger ending. It's a shame finance problems closed the studio before the game was finished.



ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES

It's been 25 years since James Cameron's classic sci-fi film and we're only now due to receive a game that may honour it properly, with Gearbox's Aliens: Colonial Marines dropping later this year. Sure, there were a handful of decent 2D games based on the Aliens franchise but not one of the dozen 3D games has been worth our time. Which is especially frustrating given Aliens is one of the best source materials for a shooter you could ever ask for. The beeping motion tracker and acid-for-bloodbeasties are begging for the right treatment.

What if it was released?

We all would have appreciated it if the developers had powered on and delivered a great Aliens game for PS2 a decade ago.



MAXIMO 3

We've got mixed feelings about Maximo 3. The original game is one of our favourite PS2 titles. It was the spiritual sequel to the Ghouls 'n' Ghosts games (equal parts brilliant and ballpulverisingly-hard) and a perfect example of a 2D franchise translated into 3D properly. Maximo used his sword to cleave skeletons neatly in two and could upgrade his abilities with various suits of armour. Unfortunately the second game diluted the best bits and over-complicated others. Unsurprisingly its sales tanked well below expectations and caused the third game to be canned.

What if it was released?

Judging by the decaying quality of the second game, *Maximo 3* would have been a stinker, so let's leave this corpse buried.



FULL THROTTLE: HELL ON WHEELS

Tim Schafer (best known for creating Brütal Legend and being a consistently awesome dude) was in the midst of creating a sequel to the popular '90s point-and-click RPG Full Throttle. For those unfamiliar with the franchise, think Duke Nukem as a bad-ass biker and you're on the right page. A sweet trailer was even shown off at E3 2002 and then almost immediately the project was cancelled.

What if it was released?

It looked underwhelming visually but it could still have been every bit as compelling as the original. While many of the most promising cancellations appeared in some form on a later console, or as part of a different project, Hell on Wheels sadly rode off into the sunset.



STARGATE SG-I: THE ALLIANCE

Stargate fans must have done some heavy karmic crap in previous lives because they cannot catch a break. All three Stargate games over the last decade have been cancelled and resulted in the development studios behind them going bankrupt. The Alliance was a shooter where you could pick an SG-1 team member of your choice to vaporise Haaken scum from the face of every world you visited. The game showed promise and included full voice and facial scan support from the TV show's cast but a raft of miss-management issues caused its demise.

What if it was released?

The Sydney team who worked on it for seven years would have appreciated their project being completed; that's for sure. The game itself looked average but there were legions of *Stargate* fans at the time who would have been pleased to play through it.

STARCRAFT:

This cancellation stings especially for OPS. In 2003 we flew over to LA to write an OPS cover feature about Starcraft: Ghost. The game looked seriously cool. Think Metal Gear Solid but sexier and with more technology. Its smokin' hot star Ghost could turn herself invisible and snipe enemies while dangling upside-down by her leas. Despite its high quality and more than five years of development, including a move to another studio, it was cancelled. Considering many other publishers have released truckloads games that weren't even half as good as Ghost looked, you have to respect Blizzard's commitment to quality. Oh, and during the 2003 studio visit Blizzard had another little PC game it was showing, called World of Warcaft or something. Not sure how it turned out...

What if it was released?

Given it wasn't up to Blizzard's impeccable standards clearly it wasn't perfect but it still would have been a seriously cool sci-fi stealth game.

CAMPFIRE

Wow, a game where you take your pick from four different serial killers and hunt down victims to kill. Trophy Earned: Most Tasteless Game Ever. We're guessing the developers were laughed out of every boardroom pitch to publishers. Or, more likely, the executives asked them to leave with pained 'please don't stab us, you psycho' expressions.

What if it was released?

At least it might have had the dubious honour of being the fasted banned game in Australian history.

WHAT IF... COMICS

Marvel liked the 'What if...' concept so much it produced a series of comics around it. Each issue explored a different hypothetical question about what would have happened if a key decision played out differently. Marvel tackled some great topics. 'What if... Venom Possessed Punisher?' It'd be balls-out brilliant is the answer! Other issues were just plain weird though; 'What if... Wolverine was a vampire?' And some issues were clearly written by the work experience kid; 'What if... Spider-Man Never Married Mary Jane?' Answer: nobody cares!



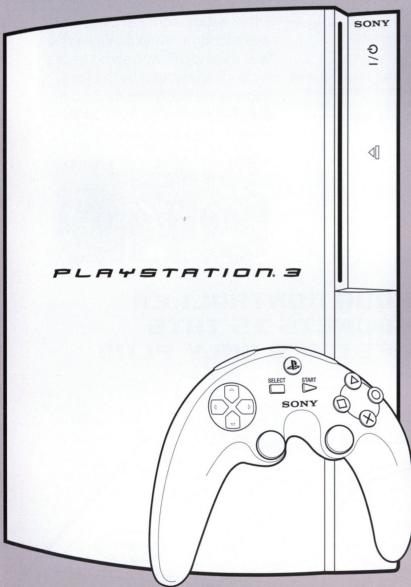
FOUR CONTROLLER SOCKETS IS THIS DESIGN'S ONLY PLUS



2007-PRESENT

WHAT IF THESE PS3 GAMES HADN'T BEEN CANCELLED?

You're probably not going to have a hard time remembering the PS3 right now, unless you're reading this magazine in a decade's time (in which case, "Hello future dude. Do you have jetpacks yet?"). The PS3 library isn't close to being shut for business and there is already a huge catalogue of classics. Just try and pry us away from our copies of *Uncharted*, *Skyrim* or *Call of Duty* and see what happens. Let's take a look at some of the games we didn't get a chance to own.



THANK THE GAMING GODS SONY DIDN'T UNLEASH THE BOOMERANG CONTROLLER



THE AVENGERS

We can blame Spongebob and a glut of other sub-standard kids and film-licensed games for signing the death warrant for The Avengers project, and 200 Aussie development jobs at THQ to boot. Retailers weren't interested in stocking another film-licensed game after the weak sales Iron Man and Captain America, so The Avengers game and the Brisbane studio that created it were shut down. The Avengers featured four-player co-op, allowing you to play as Hulk. Thor. Iron Man and Cap from first-person. Combat was visceral, with the Hulk's punches sending showers of blood gushing from the jaws of his opponents, as well as slick implementation of Iron Man's blasters and Cap's shield-toss. We really

What if it was released?

wanted to play this!

We would have had a chance to play one of the most promising superhero games in years, and it may just have helped rebound the film-license business in the process.



INDIANA JONES AND THE STAFF OF KINGS

There aren't many characters cooler than Indiana Jones. His relaxed style, biting banter and gung-ho attitude have made him one of Hollywood's most iconic and enduring characters. He's never really made the jump to videogames smoothly but Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings was the most promising attempt yet. It featured crazy-cool animation tech called Euphoria which ensured enemies sent reeling from Indy's attacks reacted uniquely every time.

What if it was released?

Judging by how far
LucasArts' Star Wars:
The Force Unleashed
under-delivered on its
similarly lofty promises,
we think it's a good thing
Indy was boxed up, never
to be heard from again
(Ark of the Covenantstyle). And hey, let's face
it, the Uncharted titles
are better Indiana Jones
games than anything
LucasArts could do.









ROAD RASH

One of EA's most enduring franchises almost rode back onto our screens five years ago but was tossed on the scrapheap when the studio was closed. Road Rash fans will remember its unique mix of racing and motorcycle combat. Several great 16-bit games were made, and one rock 'n' roll, roller coaster of awesomeness landed on the PSX, but the franchise has failed to get its groove back over the last 15 years.

What if it was released?

We could have witnessed the triumphant return of Road Rash's brutal biking action. A leaked video showed enhanced combat moves like being able to grab fellow bikers and yank them off their bikes. Make it now, EA.

HIGHLANDER

Turns out there can't be only one Highlander game. It featured Owen. a previously unknown member of the immortal MacLeod family (we suppose even Christopher Lambert's washed up career was out of the developer's price range). No reason was given for Highlander's cancellation but we're quessing the 18 different time period locations and variety of combat styles was far too ambitious for the developer to deliver on.

What if it was released?

The concept sounds amazing but all signs point to *Highlander* being a stinker, so we're glad it was decapitated before it could defile any more of our respect for the original.

CALL OF DUTY: DEVIL'S BRIGADE

It turns out that as well as the *Call of Duty* games we've seen from Infinity Ward and Treyarch, Activision also had its Underground Development studio working on *Devil's Brigade*. It was set in Italy during WWII. Yawn. What's worse, it swapped *CoD*'s traditional shooter action for third-person squadbased warfare. Snore.

What if it was released?

It would have been the worst *CoD* by a longshot. It's rumoured Infinity Ward described it as "taking every cliché you hated from every other squadbased military shooter and stuffing it into *CoD*." Killing this dog was smart.

THIS IS VEGAS

Wow. The irony of Midway and WB wasting \$50 million on this cancelled project; talk about a bad bet. Canned just eight months from completion, This is Vegas is easiest to describe as Saint's Row: Vegas Edition. It focused on four gameplay modes; fighting, racing, partying and gambling.

What if it was released?

It would have been an enjoyable but unnecessary clone of a GTA-clone. The fighting and racing gameplay make sense but partying and gambling are best kept to nights out with your mates, and not videogames. "Let's have another virtual beer and spin the roulette wheel. Woohoo!" Not so much.



SKY GODS

Not a lot was ever seen of this interesting third-person shooter. From the snippets of info released we know it focused on HALO insertions into combat. HALO refers to high-altitude, low-opening skydiving where soldiers freefall rapidly before opening their chutes at the last instant to avoid detection. Unfortunately Blackfoot Studios was closed before finishing it.

What if it was released?

We'd like to have seen the game. The skydiving sequences in *Just Cause* are awesome, so building this into a co-op shooter could have been awesome.



LMNO

We hate to think how many dollars and manhours were poured into the action-adventure LMNO. The game was a highly publicized and ambitious joint production between Spielberg and EA, featuring a lithe alien escape artist called Eve. Unfortunately, remote help from Spielberg and a lack of direction forced it to stagger aimlessly in a few different directions before being dropped entirely.

What if it was released?

It could have been an amazing mix of parkour action and emotionally engaging characters, so we wish it was released.



ALTERNATE REALITY FILMS

Hollywood has successfully explored 'What if...' scenarios many times.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

What if you travelled back in time and risked erasing yourself from history by preventing your parents from falling in love? Great Scott! One of the best philosophical paradoxes ever is woven into an endlessly endearing and innovative sci-fi classic.

GROUNDHOG DAY

What if you were forced to relive the same day endlessly? Nobody gives us a funny bone erection like Bill Murray. Watching the endless loop transition Murray from disbelief, to exploitation of his reality, and finally to selfless dedication, is a journey we've happily watched again... and again... and again...

INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS

What if a crack squad had run rampage through Germany, terrifying Nazis and ultimately assassinating Hitler? Great concept, clever scripting and extreme violence make for textbook Tarantino. Textbook awesome!



The PSP might have been small but it had a huge collection of great games. Rockstars *GTA: Liberty City Stories* and *GTA: Vice City Stories* PSP titles were so amazing they were translated into PS2 versions so we could play them on the big screen. Sony's two PSP *God of War* games were similarly brilliant. And who didn't pour hours of their life into Ubisoft's hypnotic *Lumines* puzzler? What would the PSP catalogue have looked like if this mixed collection of cancelled gems and duds were finished? Let's find out.

WHAT'S WORSE THAN THE PSP'S MINI JOYSTICK NIPPLE? A PSP WITHOUT A STICK AT ALL, THAT'S WHAT. GOOD THING THIS CONCEPT WAS SHELVED

THE RETRIEVER

Remember the promising PS2 game Rise to Honor? It featured not only martial arts superstar Jet Li's likeness but also his motion-captured moves and creative involvement. To his credit, the martial arts delivered on Jet Li's trademark style. Unfortunately, nothing else about the game delivered. After a poor critical and commercial reaction both the planned PS2 sequel and the PSP spin-off, The Retriever, were KO'd.

What if it was released?

It's apt that *The Retriever* is a breed of dog, because we're betting this game would have played like one too. Sony made the right call putting it down.

PAINKILLER: HELL WARS

The original Painkiller game on PC was a thoroughly decent orgy of mindless destruction in the same vein as Serious Sam. The studio behind the games was plagued by trouble and the planned console games were repeatedly delayed and poorly received. Painkiller: Hell Wars on PSP was planned to take the essence of the PC original and refresh it with a new character and unique weapons.

What if it was released?

Painkiller's weapons were outrageous (our favourite nailed enemies to the wall Dead Space-style) so there's every chance it would have been decent.









THE ELDER SCROLLS TRAVELS: OBLIVION

Sure, the name's about as appealingly catchy as syphilis, and the ambition of condensing one of the largest console games ever onto PSP is akin to transcribing The Hitchiker's Guide to the Galaxy onto a grain of sand, but that doesn't mean it's a bad idea. The PSP edition stripped out some elements like conducting business in towns and focused almost exclusively on dungeon exploration. Although never officially cancelled, Bethesda hasn't mentioned it since its planned 2007 release never happened.

What if it was released?

The planned structure would likely have made for an enjoyable PSP dungeon explorer but the lack of any interaction with the PS3 *Oblivion* game was a massive missed opportunity. Here's hoping a PS Vita version arrives that lets you build up your *Skyrim* character while on the move.

RESIDENT EVIL PORTABLE

Very little is known about this PSP project. It was announced at E3 2009 that a new Resident Evil game specifically designed for PSP would be released in 2010. Other than that, all we have is speculation. Given nothing has been heard about it in almost three years, it's safe to say the game is no longer being made for PSP. That the RE portable project became the basis for the Nintendo handheld game Resident Evil Revelations is the most likely scenario, but it's also possible the game was completely scrapped, or shifted to a PS Vita title and is still in production.

What if it was released?

It's hard to say but given Capcom did a good job with its recent Nintendo game, there's every indication it would have been a great PSP addition to the franchise. Let's hope a PS Vita game brings the project back from the dead.

PARKOUR

Torus Games is one of Australia's most prolific studios, responsible for more than 50 games over the last 20 years. So why haven't you heard of it? Because almost all the studio's games have been painfully average licensed handheld titles. Parkour is more interesting conceptually than Torus' usual games so it's disappointing to hear it was never greenlit. A working build of a freerunning game where you'd dash across a cityscape was shopped around but no publishers picked it up.

What if it was released?

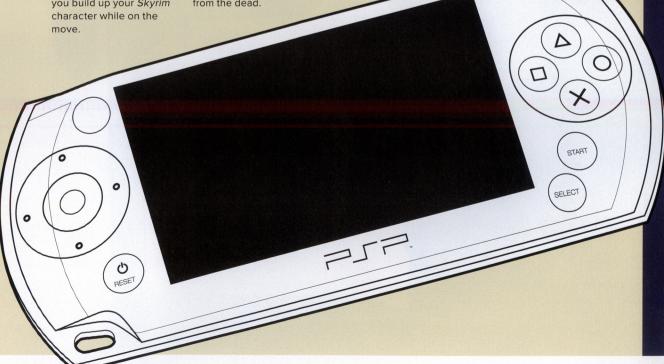
Parkour could have been a turning point for the Aussie studio, putting an innovative new IP stamp out there for Torus. Here's hoping crowd-sourced funding of projects like Kickstarter.com allow more new IP projects to get off the ground, without the need to convince risk-averse publishers to bankroll them.

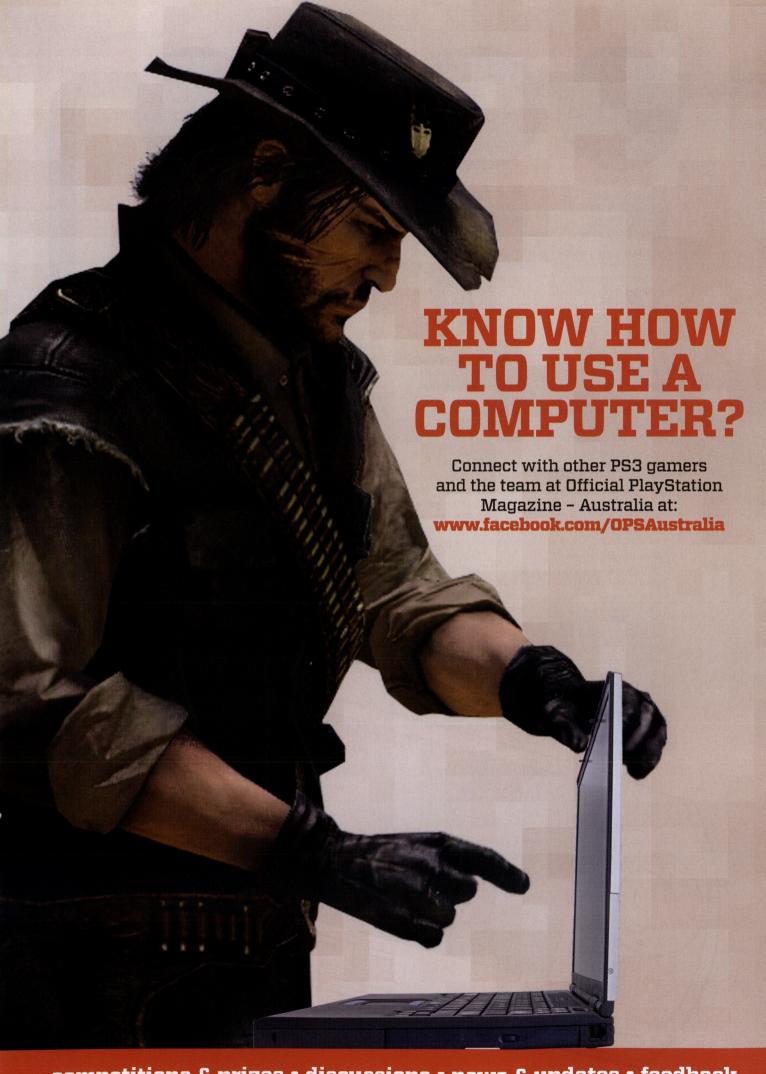
CRUSADER: NO PITY

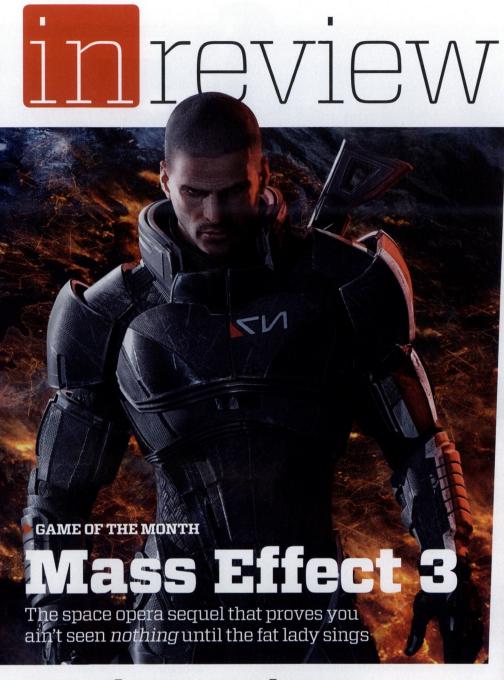
The Crusader franchise saw a couple of thoroughly decent overhead shooters released for PC and PSX in the mid-'90s. The games revolved around a RoboCop-style oneman killing machine who blasted everything in sight. Indy studio Outsider Development created a working PSP build and pitched it to EA but was unable to secure funding for the project.

What if it was released?

Crusader would almost definitely have sunken without a trace if released. Outsider Development had barely updated the decade-old graphics and gameplay in its planned PSP version. Pro tip guys, retro revisions only sell if the original game was a blockbuster.







Review ratings

Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be *perfect*. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.

Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with very high praise.

Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.

Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

Terrible: Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.

The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. OPS has handed out this score only once.

This Month

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64 Ninja Gaiden 3

65 Syndicate

66 Asura's Wrath

67 Twisted Metal

68 FIFA Street

69 Journey

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73 FIFA Football

74 Escape Plan

74 F1 2011

75 Rayman Origins

75 Shinobido: Revenge of Zen

76 Touch My Katamari

76 Lumines

77 Dungeon Hunter: Alliance

77 Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3

78 Super StarDust Delta

78 Hustle Kings

78 Top Darts

78 Asphalt Injection

79 Ridge Racer

79 MotorStorm RC

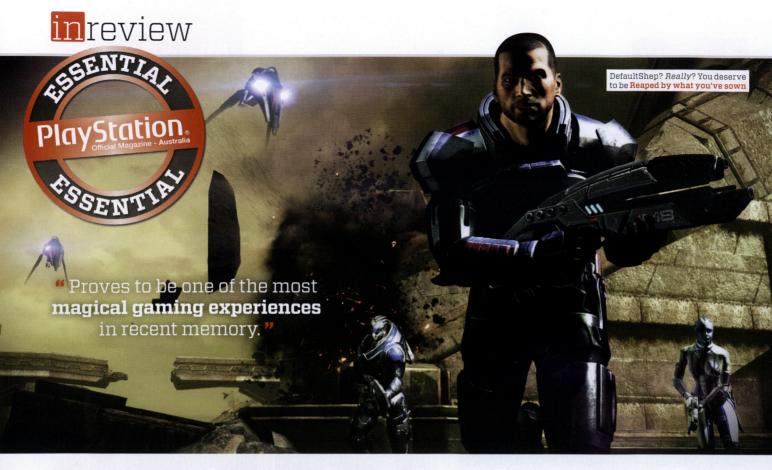
79 Tales From Space: Mutant Blobs Attack!

79 Michael Jackson The Experience HD

80 Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus



We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible. We choose to play our games using the Turtle Beach PX5 headsets for awesome surround sound. www.turtlebeachheadsets.com.au



Mass Effect 3

2012: A Space Odyssev

nace. The final frontier. These are the continuing voyages of Commander Shepard and the SSV Normandy. We say 'continuing' because your save games from Mass Effect 2 can rollover. And we say 'voyages' when we really mean 'arse-kicking, alien-licking adventures'. This is a family log, after all.

We've never been envious of 'exclusives features' available to gamers on competing consoles; but the crosssave functionality between ME and ME2 came close to turning us greener than one of Captain Kirk's shag-buddies. The point is moot now, as for the first time the PS faithful get a taste of what it's like to have 'their' Shepard continue to boldly go where no man/woman has gone before.

What sounds like a gimmick on paper proves to be one of the most magical gaming experiences in recent memory.

In the opening moments (as seen in the demo) Earth becomes ground zero in an all-out galactic war for survival. Ludicrously outgunned, Commander Shepard must go through his/her impressive address book to hit up the bureaucrats at the Citadel for the mother of all solids. A quick toiletbreak on Mars reveals valuable intel on a 'super-weapon and a catalyst combo' that may help to thwart your seemingly unstoppable foes. The kicker: Cerberus (a pro-human, extremist group) is after that Reaper tech, too.

From there, the game opens up, as Shepard no longer seeks to just find and impress squadmates but to collect whole civilizations. This quest is tiered into acts, though you have plenty of freedom to address the missions and many sidemissions in whatever order you like. Just be aware that the trackable 'Military Effectiveness' meter will determine how successful your war will turn out.

Surprisingly, ME3 proves to be a fantastic entry point into the series for new recruits. Firstly, because there's a human squadmate whose wide-eyed wonder about this rich galaxy enables BioWare to educate players. Secondly, all the biggest moments, decisions and consequences are all neatly contained within this concluding chapter.

ME2 drew criticisms for being liteon when it came to traditional RPG elements; ME3 is quite a bit deeper. The six character classes are more distinct and you've got wider opportunities to evolve with dozens of unique weapons and abilities, each with upgrades, stat bonuses and modifications. The size of your arsenal now affects your power recharge and mobility, plus, armour is piece-by-piece (not just cosmetic).

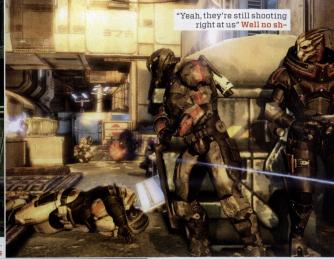
Speaking of upgrades; galaxy exploration, charting new worlds, and scanning planets have all been optimised to not be boring chores. Exploring galaxies can often yield valuable rewards including additional credits and assets that can be used to improve your endgame odds. But there's now an element of skill and danger to it, as random kleptomania will attract Reapers who'll bring an arse-kicking with them.

Did you think the action in the last game was a bit clunky compared to other shooters? Well, Bioware has streamlined the hell out of that, as well. The engine can now allow jaw-dropping scenes of



inreview





Shooting the shoulder it barges all the things with, not a taction

Galaxy at War

Four-person co-op multiplayer is a new game mode introduced in Mass Effect 3. It's class-based, 'hold the line' stuff that features levelling, customisation, and progression. It's a solid, fun diversion with friends, but we think the best facet of it is that it's an entirely optional. Should you choose to skip it, you can raise your 'Effective Military Strength' to the optimal level through diligent progress in the singleplayer campaign. This is icing of the cake stuff here, nothing more, nothing less.

scale, and all cinematics slide elegantly into adrenaline-pumping gunplay. Shepard has greater physicality and positively barnstorms about the battlefield, busting the sort of moves that puts him/her on par with the best cover-jockeys out there. Couple that with ruthless, diverse enemy types, plus a noticeable increase in overall difficulty, and ME3 is bloody intense at the best of times. Your 'Insanity' trophy will be a mark of honour.

But perhaps the best part of this package is how obliging and adjustable it is for every taste. From the start you're given the option to play the adventure as an Action (emphasis on combat and conversations play like cutscenes), Role-Playing (traditional flavour), or Story experience (lots of yacking, easy attacking). This really is a ride with a gear for driver.

Reading all this and peeking at the score to the right, you've probably deduced that we love this game. But a 10 does not denote perfection. The recurring

dream sequences where Shepard plodwalks can feel overlong, under-dramatic and the time-window for making Paragon/ Renegade actions can be crazy-short in spots. Also, the brief turret sections lack polish and feel about as shoehorned in as Miranda and her spacesuit.

Ultimately, none of those peccadilloes hold ME3 back much. BioWare has achieved the seemingly impossible by taking the template of the much-celebrated ME2 and improving practically everything across the board. Most notably, the emotionality of the

characters have been increased to near Naughty Dog levels, thanks to genuinely hilarious exchanges, touching scenes of reunion and (possible) tragedies that tug at the heart strings.

Mass Effect 3 is an amazing experience in and of itself. It's also the perfect capstone to a true AAA franchise, offering a poignant conclusion that'll stick long after the credits have rolled. You're standing on the precipice of one of the best games Earth money can buy. Dive in.

Adam Mathew

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Bioware's improvements to its engine are felt everywhere. Quicker, slicker and has the sort of production values that put George Lucas to shame.

SOUND All cast members reprise their roles with aplomb. Features a AAA score that's haunting and heart-pumping stuff.

CONTROLS Can now hold its own with any top TPS. Menus have been streamlined, too.

REPLAY VALUE New

Game Plus, and a meaningful multiplayer.

Verdict

A gaming tour de force that one-ups its impressive predecessor.





all the time you spend gunning

in the team and their own unique

- one that we hope to resolve for



XPlanation

Character progression in Operation Raccoon City is a streamlined affair revolving around a single resource: experience points. Just about everything you do in the game - killing enemies, achieving objectives, finding secrets - will net you XP that you can then spend on buying new weapons, abilities and upgrades. It's a simple, rewarding system, well-paced and implemented. We like it.





The problem is that abilities are spread thin. Basically, there shouldn't be six characters. There should be four. Bertha the medic and Four-Eyes the scientician could have easily been compressed into a single operative, as could have Spectre and recon-ninja Vector. With only five abilities to unlock apiece (two passive, three active), characters lack versatility, an unfortunate trait further exacerbated by the fact that you can only take one active ability with you into the field.

Another problem with ORC's operative/class system is that you're only allowed to customise and upgrade the character you're controlling. You can determine who'll be in your squad, but you can't tell them what guns and abilities to use. In fact, Al-controlled squadmates don't even have abilities. They're just grunts with guns and act with all the intelligence of tactical awareness

it affects your offensive options. Plus, don't expect help from them because you won't get it. They've got more important things to do than save your worthless life, idiot. There are walls to shoot, traps to blunder into, monsters to ignore. Who else is gonna do all that? YOU? Tch.

Unsurprisingly, your enemies are just as stupid as your friends, prone to all the same foibles and then some. For zombies and other bio-organic weapons, it's not such an issue because they're supposed to be stupid. For what are meant to be highly-trained spec-ops soldiers, it's a little more problematic. Beyond a basic understanding of cover and how to use it, human enemies are otherwise utterly brain-dead and seem incapable of working together in any significant capacity.

Still, combat in ORC is not entirely without merit. Threeway set piece battles between marauding hordes of undead, specops, and the USS are relentless and exhilarating when executed properly. There's enough variation between enemies, particularly of the hideous undead variety, that complacency is not an option. The ability to wound enemy soldiers to induce bleeding and turn them into walking zombie lures is a nice touch, if something of a useless novelty.

The fact that ORC is intended to be a multiplayer game first and foremost is nowhere more evident than in its single-player component. It's a moderately enjoyable solo experience, but a lonely one that clearly suffers for want of attention. Simple things – like the ability to equip and upgrade your squad, or issue them basic commands - could have made the experience a lot more enjoyable, and their absence is telling. Check back next issue for our multiplayer impressions and definitive verdict. 🎝 Dan Staines

SOUND Voice acting is predictably atrocious. though the music - when you can hear it - is decent enough.

CONTROLS Intuitive, uncomplicated, but also frustratingly unresponsive at times - particularly for melee attacks.

REPLAY VALUE There are things to find and stuff to shoot to unlock gallery goodies and extra experience, but you probably won't care.

Verdict

Entertaining but seriously - and predictably flawed



Play this if you like

Ninja Gaiden 2, God of War

Info

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: THQ DEVELOPER: TEAM NIN.IA PLAYERS: 1-8 RRP: \$99.95

or fans of the Ninja Gaiden series, this third outing in the notoriously challenging franchise will be a two-toed shoe in. The formula hasn't changed too much, except for some combat refinements and the addition of an explosive-arrow-firing bow that definitely puts the 'bow' into Rambo. In fact, the biggest changes are to returning protagonist Ryu Hayabusa who has been humanised somewhat by his tendency to reveal his face to everyone and the exploration of the darker side of being Death's greatest harbinger.

For those expecting a Tarantino-like exploration of the consequences of being a bad person, you're looking at the

wrong series. It didn't take long for us to realise that Ninja Gaiden 3 has more cheese than a fondue party, but it works in the favour of this frantic over-the-top hack-and-slash title. The game opens with a quicktime event (QTE) that shows Ryu from the gargling perspective of a foe that he is eviscerating. This quickly leads into a QTE battle against an angelic sci-fi titan. But that's just the tip of the madness. We're not going to lie to you, lady. This is gonna hurt

Apart from a range of balaclava-loving terrorists, you can expect to fight mutants, teleporting German Shepherds, oversized bugs and dinosaurs. If you're playing this game seriously, you're doing it wrong.

Returning fans should be delighted to know that Hard mode is suitably challenging, while casual players can expect a walk in the park on the lowest difficulty. It's clear that Team Ninja has made allowances for newer players on Normal and Hero (read: Move) modes, but it can still be a confusing affair. Certain training prompts will happen every time they're required, while others are strangely absent, such as combo tips (or even a command list) or how to counter. On Hero mode, this isn't as much of an issue as it's ridiculously easy; even more-so with two-slash-type Move assistance.

A lot of combat scenarios can be bested on Normal without having to block or evade and you can simply mash your way to victory. At other times, particularly later in the game, the difficulty spikes harder than a metalhead's hair and you should expect to die frequently. Couple this with the seemingly arbitrary nature of breaking through an enemy's guard, and cinematic badass ninja-ry can quickly descend into controller-smashing frustration. It's also difficult to keep track of Ryu during fights thanks to the constantly shifting camera.

At the end of the day, Ninja Gaiden 3 comes across as a game for the fans, even though it tries to attract a casual audience. If you're a new player and can get past the repetitive fights and other aforementioned gripes on Normal, there's a lot of entertaining brutality to be sucked from the marrow of this title.

🖶 Nathan Lawrence

Final Say

PRESENTATION Often

gorgeous visuals that are complemented by believable physics.

SOUND The music can get a tad repetitive, and some of the dialogue is awful even if the voice actors aren't

CONTROLS

Straightforward and easy to master; pity about the underused Move controls, though.

REPLAY VALUE A tough campaign (on Normal and Hard) will keep fans entertained for hours, while online modes offer plenty of hack-and-slash longevity.

Verdict

enough.

An attempt at accessibility that still feels a lot like fan service, but makes vou feel like a ninia often

April 2012





Play this if you like

The Chronicles Of Riddick

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: NOW (NEW
ZEALAND ONLY)
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER:
STARBREEZE STUDIOS
PLAYERS: 1-4
RRP: NZ\$119.95



Fully breached

'Breaching' is the term that Starbreeze uses to describe their in-game hacking mechanic. You won't need to play through any mini-games to pull them off, either. Simply select the desired breach, aim it and unleash. Given the already frantic nature of the combat. breaching adds that extra touch of class when taking down a group of enemies. You can make their weapons backfire, order them to kill themselves or convince them to fight for you; all by just holding a button. Better vet, the more kills you get, the faster these powers regenerate. Versatile killing has never been so easy

tarbreeze Studios has a knack for worshipping narrative and messing with the established recipe for what constitutes a first-person shooter. With The Chronicles of Riddick games they proved that movie-inspired titles could tell compelling stories, while challenging the all-important 'S' component of the FPS acronym. In the original The Darkness, Starbreeze continued to build upon a strong narrative foundation, but threw in a supernatural twist on the shooting mechanic.

With Syndicate, Starbreeze hasn't tried to go for three-for-three on the narrative-foundation front, but they have upped the ante as far as frantic shooter experiences go. You play as Miles Kilo, an agent of the powerful EuroCorp syndicate who is genetically augmented to the point where he'd give Adam Jensen a run for his money.

Right from the start, you feel like a demigod, dispatching enemies with ease thanks to an overpowered arsenal and a whole bunch of 'breaching' powers that let you slow time, enhance damage and decrease ouchies from incoming bullets.

The frantic firefights you'll have to contend with in both single-player and co-op are the shining star in *Syndicate*'s crown. Starbreeze shows that they're willing to abandon the sometimes stealthy sensibilities of *Riddick* and *The Darkness* in favour of a full-frontal assault on the senses that rarely feels the same and offers a creative high-energy experience from intro to credits.

The narrative might have a backseat roll when compared to the likes of Starbeeze's last two shooters, but that backseat has more first-class Hollywood voice acting talent than a limo en route to the Oscars. Brian Cox leads the charge, lending his likeness and vocal prowess to boss figure Jack Denham, Rosario Dawson

follows suit as Lily Drawl, while Michael Wincott imbues fellow agent Jules Merit with his unmistakeably 'that guy' voice.

"Ready? I'll pass these bullets to you

from my gun, you catch th- ah, nuts

As you blast your way through the various levels, you'll be met by waves of increasingly difficult foes that earn the right to be called artificial intelligence. They roll, seek cover, lay down covering fire and lob grenades like they're going out of fashion. If you think they're tough, the bosses in *Syndicate* will give even the most competent players a run for their money; granted, you will need to play through on the hardest difficulty to best that challenge. This is marred only by an occasional Al fail, while on lower difficulties, the game can feel a tad short.

There are also some entry-level RPG components that reward different play styles and a cooperative mode that is frustratingly difficult, and yet so very rewarding, when attempted with only one other person

Syndicate comes close to shooter perfection, which makes it a crying shame that it was refused classification in Australia. Nathan Lawrence

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Occasionally bland, but mostly wow-tastic in its depiction of a dystopian future.

SOUND Guns boom, enemies scream, dubstep choreographs the onscreen destruction.

CONTROLS Handles like a polished shooter should.

REPLAY VALUE The

unforgiving higher difficulties and co-op unlocks offer the goods

Verdict

A slick sci-fi shooter whose unavailability in Australia makes it all the more appealing.







sura's Wrath is a hugely polarised achievement. On one hand it's arguably the most successful gaming recreation of Japanese anime style, but on the other hand there's so little meaningful gameplay in it, that we're hard pressed to even call it a game.

Asura is a cool character. He's a demi-god with more rippling muscle in one earlobe than most of us mere mortals will achieve in a lifetime. Throw in a "Husband to a murdered wife. Father to a murdered daughter..." Gladiator-style revenge rampage and you have one of the bloodthirstiest characters yet. Think Kratos in a Kimono and you've got Asura.

Watching Asura tear enemies limb from limb or punch them so hard their head explodes in a fine mist is entertaining enough. And the comic book inked-style visuals and batshit crazy anime setpieces are jaw-dropping (cutting planets in half with swords or punching enemies kilometres across the surface of the Moon are commonplace). Unfortunately, 'watching' is the key word.

The first chapter sees Asura hurtling towards Earth, firing lasers from his fingertips at an orbiting fleet of giant, mechanical, fish-shaped battleships. The problem is nothing you do has any meaningful impact on how this chapter plays out. You fly through the fleet on a

set path and tear your way through the battleships with your bare hands at specific points. The battleship fistfights trigger quicktime events but here's the kicker; you can't fail them! Ludicrously, failing to get the buttons right will often result in Asura performing the action as if you had entered it correctly (the only impact your failure has is a slightly lower score at the end of the chapter). The rare ones that do require you to enter the buttons correctly simply pause the action and wait endlessly until you enter the right button.

Out of curiosity, we put the controller down (during a 'gameplay' sequence) and watched in stunned frustration as the game continued on happily playing itself for six minutes. It's inconceivable that there are gameplay levels that cannot be failed or be changed by your actions. Even Dragon's Lair, the game that birthed the concept 29 years ago, had consequences.

Asura's Wrath does dish up more serious attempts at gameplay later on. The problem with the gameplay is it's repetitive and only briefly punctuates the cut-scenes. The entire game (if it can be called one) only lasts six hours, and four of those hours are cutscenes! Invariably, they look amazing, but we can't recommend spending \$100 on two hours of average gameplay, even if it is bookended by stunning cut-scenes. 🎝 Naz Pattison

Final Sav

PRESENTATION More imaginative and visually stunning than many dedicated anime films.

SOUND Impressive voicework, especially Asura

CONTROLS Watch, hammer button, watch... repeat... eiect.

REPLAY VALUE Nowhere near as much as we expected.

Verdict

Gorgeous, and amusingly insane, but its lack of value will give you a personal taste of Asura's seething

wrath.



Play this if you like

Overpriced anime

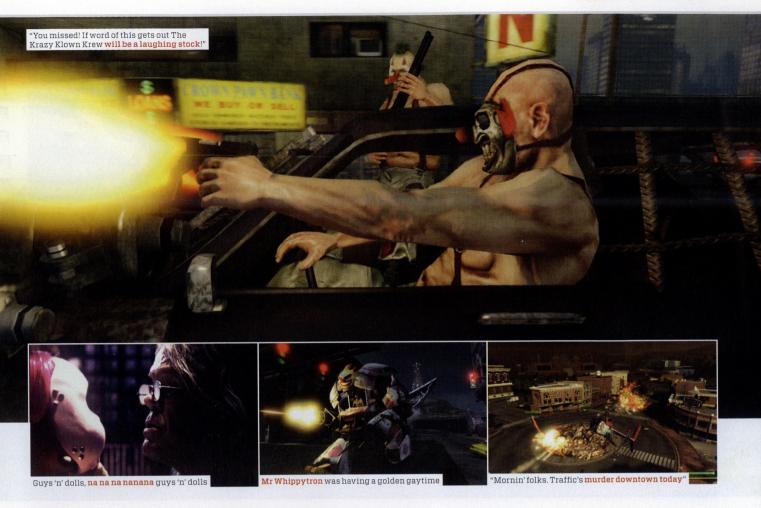
Info FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION RELEASE: NOW DISTRIBUTOR: THQ DEVELOPER: CAPCOM (CYBERCONNECT2) **PLAYERS:** 1









Twisted Metal

Drive the I Scream Van that serves everybody



Play this if you like

Shooting clowns and bozos, and Bozo The Clown, Blur, CoD

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: OUT NOW
PUBLISHER: SONY
DEVELOPER: EAT
SLEEP PLAY
PLAYERS: 1 - 16
RRP: \$79.95

f you didn't have an unreasoning fear of clowns already, *Twisted Metal* will sort you out soon enough. Newbies should view this game as multiplayer-focused vehicular warfare waged by children's party professionals. Veterans should view it as the best game in this long-running Sony series.

Eat Sleep Play has crafted gameplay that sits snuggly between your typical fast-paced, tactical shooter like *Warhawk* and the sort of hilarious, random car-nage reserved for the destruction derby mode in *FlatOut*. After picking your side in the eternal conflict waged between psycho clowns and doll-lovers (apparently), you must maul all comers with a garage full of diverse vehicle types, each with unique weapons and strategic quirks.

You're tossed into surprisingly large arenas jam-packed with pitfalls and are told to rack up some roadkill with a .50 cal, your two special attacks and pre-selected sidearms. All of these attitude-adjusters are much easier to access this time, as they're mapped to the four points of your d-pad and there's a very shrewd weapon balance at play here. Couple that with a variety of colourful riffs on Capture The Flag, DM, TDM and Last Man Standing, and Twisted Metal really does have that 'one

more kill' hook for every taste.

It's a blast learning how and when to play cat and mouse with your foes in both single and multiplayer. We also liked how a 'life' feels just like that in terms of duration in any online match. Anybody sick of being insta-spawn killed, or sniped every six seconds, will love this game. Campers are virtually non-existent, too, and being effective doesn't require devotion to an XP unlock system. Most of the good stuff can be got via solo play which, admittedly, may cause an early exit for some players.

Fast, refreshing and full of tactical nuance; these are the ingredients in the Twisted Metal cocktail, but it isn't without an odd aftertaste. Disappointingly, the single-player covers three fiends, rather than a bunch of dedicated mini-campaigns for the full menagerie of maniacs. It's live-action mixed with CGI stuff that gets a bit cheeseball in spots, but is quite engaging. The solo is decent aside from a few checkpointing oddities, but if you're a soloist we'd suggest the budget buy.

Twisted Metal's 10-year hiatus has made this something of a rad time capsule. We hope shooter folk decide to stow the Semtex and take the wheel. Because this is the most fun we've had online in ages.

Adam Mathew

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Extremely endearing characters and weapons. Massive maps with great attention to detail.

SOUND White Zombie and NWA have never been put to better use than here.

CONTROLS Tight, intelligent controls that never skip a beat. Responsive cars too.

REPLAY Hook up with the right road warriors and you won't be leaving this wasteland any time soon.

Verdict

Great fun straight off the spikedbat. Limited unlocks cap longevity.







t might flaunt the world's greatest player, Lionel Messi, fresh off contract with Konami's *Pro Evolution* series, but *FIFA Street* strikes with the menace of an off-thebench substitute. While EA Sports have coated it with their usual chic paintjob, the hobbling and tedious game mechanics will leave players walling about like an Italian in a penalty box.

For those unfamiliar with the series, FIFA Street focuses on trick-heavy street football including the popular indoor version know as futsal. This reboot has pulled back the flashy flamboyance of the series and basted it with the authentic tone of the main brand. Recall FIFA Street 3's caricature style for all the players? Gone. How about the super-duper

powerups that let gamers bury goals from the next postcode? Yep – given the boot, too.

FIFA Street plays it real. Flashy tricks still form the sport's bedrock but instead of being able to transform the ball into a sphere of light from Chuck Norris's fruit bowl, players are limited to FIFA's typical assortment of ball theatrics.

Yet enjoyment of FIFA Street relies entirely on how players react to the game's one-on-one mechanics. FIFA Street borrows heavily from FIFA 12's divisive Tactical Defending which means defenders must jockey their opposite and only and go for a manual tackle when they see an obvious opportunity. Dribblers meanwhile have an arsenal of tricks, flicks, and feints to burn into space.

FIFA Street's problem is that this core mechanic - and with passing and teamwork feeling like a secondary consideration, it is core - feels tedious and unbalanced. Critically the balance from FIFA 12 has been exaggerated and attackers now have emphatic control when set. So aggressive defence is out. replaced instead by ad nauseam jockeying that slows the action to a grind while attackers dangle the ball with footloose poetry. It's fist-in-thetelevision frustrating at times, and at one point we perused the pause menu looking for the "Hire cartel sniper to take out dribbler" option.

At least the content is streamlined. Apart from the headline Exhibition option, players can compete in the World Tour mode, online or off, and travel the world taking on all comers. The Panna mode, which sees trick points stored in a bank and registered only after a goal, is also a genuinely viable go-to game type provided you're okay with the above gripes.

Electronic Arts' flagship FIFA series has gone from strength to strength over the years so it's understandable that the delicacies of this tricky bastard son haven't been nailed with this sudden change of direction. While there's no need for a yearly update, we're eager to see if EA can inject more fun into their next Street foray. James Ellis

Final Say

PRESENTATION Vibrant colours and FIFA 12's player models, but we preferred the more exaggerated look from last time.

SOUND Great track list, as usual, but the matches could've done with some comedic commentary. Why so serious?

CONTROLS Attacking feels good but defending will make you hate your life. Plus glitches can occur near goal, too.

REPLAY VALUE Plenty of online options including the ability to create a team with your friends and import your FIFA 12 pro, but the series still feels light on teamwork strategy.

Verdict

crossbar.

Kudos to EA for going for the revamp instead of the rehash, but this one is just off the







Journey

if you like

up with a hangover

Info

of hours - and not waking

FORMAT: PS3 *

GENRE: ADVENTURE

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR:

DEVELOPER:

RRP: TBC

SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

PLAYERS: 1-MANY

This one's worth embarking on

rom the outset, *Journey* is a game that defies explanation. This is due through exposition or goal-setting. Its sole instruction seems to be "make of this

In the distance, the heat is rising from gravestones. Subtle, haunting music plays in the background. It's a strange ethereal soundscape that perfectly underpins the bleached desert landscape. In the its summit, a beam of bright, white light streaks towards the heavens. The whole scene conveys a curious mix of loss and wonder that's unexpectedly emotional.

Not far from the starting point lies a allowing for longer jumps and gliding.

Things kick off on top of a sand dune.

glowing rune that seems out of place triggers a flurry of small runes that leave you with a scarf tied firmly around your neck. The scarf holds a finite charge that be refilled by the many cloth scraps you'll contact with the runes extends the scarf,



Progressing towards the mountain uncovers a wealth of cloth-based wildlife. Barrelling through the air with a school of fabric air-dolphins sounds bananas, but From time to time, other adventurers can be seen. There's no way to interact with than the rune on their chest, there's no way of telling one traveller from another.

With no explicit goals to speak of, there's no reason to compete with other people and with no means of verbalising interactions; there's no way to cause absolutely anyone – the only certainty is that you're both travelling towards the same end point. It's incredibly elegant and these fleeting interactions are strangely affecting.

It's not all fun and games, though. The introduction of enemies seems almost cruel after the first few levels of quiet exploration and the change in mood from bright and breezy to dark and threatening is a real shock. The way enemies inflict damage feels almost uncomfortably visceral – there's a sense of separation and loss that save points and 10-second respawns cannot hope to match.

Sadly, it's all too brief. We felt we'd barely scratched the surface when the credits rolled. Sure, there was a suitably enigmatic ending, but we wanted more. Much more. phone off, park your cynicism at the door and enjoy it, uninterrupted, while it lasts. Alan Moore

Final Say

PRESENTATION

SOUND The haunting

CONTROLS Unobtrusive

REPLAY VALUE It's short, but we started a new Journey within minutes of finishing our first one. With more people coming online at telease, we can see ourselves playing this multiple times.

Verdict

A game unlike any other.













Info

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: SPORT RELEASE: DUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: EA **DEVELOPER:** EA CANADA PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$99.95

or an arcade stunt racer SSX is hard work. There was a time (places pipe in mouth) when gamers could sit back with a Pepsi, bag of Jaffas, some bros, and a bean bag, and pump the hell outta the latest Tony Hawk or SSX and not break much of a sweat. Fun could be had. No furniture need be hurled. This time conquering SSX, with all its labyrinthine trails, trademark spins, and electric tweaks, demands Yoda-like patience.

Case in point: the game's Survive It runs. Players need to finish each course without falling into a chasm and becoming a humanflavoured icicle. Each track is packed with dangerous cliffs, obstacles and crevasses but what makes these tracks so grating is that there's little signposting of what's to come around blind corners.

While the more traditional Race It and Trick It runs fair better, players won't get much out of SSX until they put a lot of time into each of the game's courses - packed with branching paths, high ridges, and suicide leaps - and work out a custom plan of attack. Without one, SSX can deteriorate into a discombobulating frazzle of questions like: where am I going? Is this the fastest way down? And how come the CPU is 15 seconds ahead of me? While the required



exploration means a tonne of replay value, it also means newbies will have to board up a hockey stick-shaped difficulty curve to feel in the game.

Almost as an acknowledgement of each track's lack of feedback, EA has built in a couple of devices to take the edge off. Firstly, if players fail an event too many times in the World Tour mode they'll get the option to skip it. Secondly, SSX features a rewind feature, similar to that seen in GRiD, that allows players to move their boarder back in time prior to their tumble. Time only goes backwards for the player's character though, leaving their opponents to continue on, and during Survive It events rewinds are limited.

Yep, despite its hammy characters and World Tour story, SSX has plenty of depth. Making it chunkier are the robust online modes. EA has gone all out and delivered options that allow players to race in huge events along with hordes of others.

Outstanding releases entice new players into their grasp with fun then feed them more complexity to keep them interested. With that in mind, SSX doesn't quite deliver as much enjoyment up front as it should have, but it will keep the dedicated carving. James Ellis

Final Say

PRESENTATION They've nailed this landing. Velvety visuals and punchy colours create a tubular winter wonderland.

SOUND Assistant commentary could've been clearer while racing, but there's top shelf music from The Hives and The Naked and Famous.

CONTROLS Not as inherently organic as Skate's control scheme, and feels a bit loose when navigating the tougher

REPLAY VALUE Huge amount of online options. including the intelligent RiderNet that can find appropriate online challenges. Plus the courses are bursting with complexity and potential.

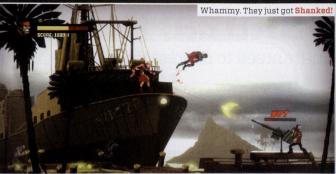
Verdict SSX is a mixed bag.











Shank 2

Take a stab at it

Play this if you like

Shank, Castle Crashers

Info

FORMAT: PS3 ** CONTROL RELEASE: NOW DISTRIBUTOR: EA DEVELOPER: KLEI ENTERTAINMENT PLAYERS: 1-2 RRP: \$15.95

ike a cartoonish Robert Rodriguez film brought to life, the original Shank was a 2D action junkie's delight. Carving a blood-soaked path of revenge using guns, chains and your always at the ready prison shivs or "shanks" you navigated your way through outlandish bosses and cruel difficulty spikes to take down the evil Cesar who robbed you of your only love.

While the predecessor was a solid albeit short outing with optional co-op, this sequel seems less polished. The backgrounds lack the eye-catching finish, the plot is just a discombobulated mess strewn together and while Klei Entertainment has evened out the

difficulty spikes it lacks the charm of the original. The addition of a counter is more than welcome and of all the weapons at your disposal the shotgun is still the most brutal way to say goodnight Gracie.

Where Shank 2 shines, however, is the new survival mode. Choosing from a multitude of unlockable popculture heavy characters, each with unique perks, you and a buddy will double-tap wave after wave of henchmen, underlings and bosses as you protect three supply caches from sneaky bombers. It totally makes up for omitting co-op mode and will keep you entertained far longer than the campaign.
Dave Kozicki

Final Say

PRESENTATION Great

animations let down by sub-par backgrounds.

SOUND Sensational Spanish guitar with a *Lethal Weapon* twang.

CONTROLS Surprisingly deep combat that remains accessible.

REPLAY VALUE Can you survive 30 waves?

Verdict

Average solo play but Survival's thrilling.

7

I Am Alive

One of the year's biggest surprises

Play this if you like

Resident Evil merged with The Road

Info

FORMAT: PS3 © DECEMBER ADVENTURE
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$19.95

he buzz has been mild for I Am Alive, so we weren't expecting a lot, but our surprise mounted with each sequence. Rare is the game that packs in this much originality, pulseracing action and palpable pride at overcoming serious challenges.

The game's silent hero is a survivor returning to an utterly devastated city, hoping to find and rescue his family. As you survey the shattered buildings and drink in the bleached, dust-filled ruin you'll notice the diluted and drained colours match *I Am Alive*'s wasteland setting perfectly.



The majority of the game sees you climbing your way around the deserted city, using its crushed and torn buildings as a varied, if dangerous, jungle gym. Your survivor must rush through each climb because his energy is constantly sapped as he climbs, so you'll fall and die if your pace slackens. The game's only real downer is that the survivor is twitchy when you're changing climbing directions.

What really made us fall in love with the game was the enemy confrontations though. You'll be forced to face-down many groups of enemies, often without a single bullet. The only way you can avoid being shot dead in these situations is to surprise the gun-toting enemies with the pointy end of your machete and grab their gun in a flash, then use it to kill the rest.

Encounters get even better when you find the bow and arrow. "Arrow" being the key word, as you only have one. You'll need to force them to back off far enough with your gun that you can pull out the bow and let loose an arrow before they've carved you into sushi with their machetes.



Final Say

PRESENTATION Bleached, grainy and atmospheric.

SOUND Tense music suits its stressful action.

CONTROLS Highly satisfying combat but climbing controls are a bit twitchy at times.

REPLAY VALUE Six-hour campaign, but it's designed to reward you for going back and completing extra challenges. Plus a total barrain at its PSN price.

Verdict

Very dark, constantly tense, yet hugely satisfying.



Yakuza: Dead Souls

Guaranteed to deaden your soul

Play this if you like

Zombie genocide and have low standards

Info

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: RPG RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA DEVELOPER: SEGA PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$79.95

e don't blame Sega for trying something desperate to resurrect the Yakuza franchise Even its best game, Yakuza 3, felt dated when released in 2010, and the franchise has been in decline ever since. Sadly Dead Souls simply bolts a zombie apocalypse onto Yakuza 4's broken template, without making any effort to improve it.

What is it about Dead Souls that feels painfully dated? The clunky and overly complicated combat and camera controls, combined with inconsistent rules are the main offenders. Where modern games have camera systems that are so intuitive

they feel like the camera's being carried by a mind-reading ninja who's somersaulting off walls to get the view you want before you even know you want it, Dead Souls' camera feels like it's in the hands of a blind, deaf, cripple who you need to beat repeatedly about the head with a stick before he'll aim vaguely in the direction you want. Picking off zombies works well enough when you're out in the open but combat inside buildings is more about fighting the controls than the zombies.

Dead Souls often lacks consistency and legitimacy. Three bullets are required to drop a zombie but one tap from an iron bar kills instantly. Rather than balance it, the melee weapons are artificially limited, breaking after a few hits. In stark contrast, the under-powered pistol you carry comes with unlimited ammo and can never be lost.

On the upside, for those willing to fight the controls, Dead Souls is packed with the same only-in-Japan insanity that the Yakuza games are famous for and playing through the four character's storylines provides a meaty amount of game-time. For the rest of us, who don't have the time or the money to wade through painfully dated games, Dead Souls is best left in its coffin. A Naz Pattison

Final Say

PRESENTATION At least the graphics only look a couple of years old...

SOUND Inconsistent Recorded dialogue is used in cut-scenes but switches to text-only in-game.

CONTROLS Austin Powers' 13-point U-turn in a golf buggy comes to mind ..

REPLAY VALUE

Lots here for those with low standards and a lot of patience.

Verdict

Like a zombie wearing flares, this is sluggish and dated.



Gotham City Impostors

Here's where you get those wonderful toys

Team Fortress 2

Info

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: SHOOTER RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER

He must love Bionic Commando

BROS. DEVELOPER: MONOLITH PLAYERS: 1-12 RRP: \$23.95

ropping into Gotham City Impostors for the first time is a manic experience – missiles trail sparks and confetti, spritely Jokerz careen about the map on roller-skates while fat Bats in wife-beaters soar overhead like balding eagles, waiting for their moment to dive-bomb an unsuspecting foe.

The action is absolutely frantic, with the next hotspot only ever a well-placed grapple away. With Triple-A combat mechanics, character customisation and a robust levelling system there's a lot to like here.





Unfortunately, this helter-skelter, batshit (ha!) ride stalls in the lobby. Having to suffer through 10-minute waits can really take the shine off of this.

The matchmaking adds insult to injury with a system that revels in allocating mismatched teams. Getting absolutely smashed by a mob of higher ranked players after an extended stay in purgatory just isn't fun.

These gripes aside, Gotham City Impostors is a surprisingly solid shooter and with the sizeable first DLC drop, Warner Bros. is promising improvements across the board. If they deliver on that, consider upgrading this score to mustbuy status, rather than a nice-to-have.

Alan Moore

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Characters are excellent, but level design flirts with drabness

SOUND Sarcastic.

obnoxious voice acting and spot-on gadget effects.

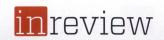
CONTROLS Rock solid - On a par with any of the shooter giants.

REPLAY VALUE Excellent - assuming you can tolerate the waits and errant matchmaking.

Verdict

A somewhat two-faced experience that hits most of the right

notes.





Unit 13

Not for the superstitious

Play this if you like

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA
GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER
INTERACTIVE
PLAYERS: 1-2
RRP: \$54.95

t's a run n' gun shooter for those who love to gun on the run. The first Vita blaster has arrived and offers reasonable brain-chundering combat for those who love to dominate global leader boards. But if you're not big on being the man with the most points in the world you'd be best saving your dough.

Unit 13 might initially feel like another SOCOM game from developer Zipper but after burning through the first few levels its unique focus becomes clear. Rather than offer players a cliche war story, absurd Bay-esque explosive set pieces, or atmospheric environments to traverse,

Unit 13's 36 missions are short, sharp fixes of action across simple bite-sized levels. It's all about efficiency – how fast you can scream through a level, how many headshots you can snag. They add up to points and once uploaded to the leaderboard international acclaim can be yours. There's even a co-op option if you'd like to play through each mission with a buddy.

Nope, these aren't bad ideas for an online portable system. The problem is the level design in the game is absurdly old hat. While there are a handful of mission types, like Direct Action, Covert, and High Value Target, the levels they take place in and the related objectives are painfully bland. "Move to this point and activate this switch. Now go down the stairs and activate this other switch." Blah, blah, blah...

If you're keen to compete for scores online, the game's serviceable cover system will keep you interested. However if that doesn't rock your aircraft carrier you'll find *Unit 13* unfortunately undistinguished.

James Ellis



Final Say

PRESENTATION Jazzy texture, dapper character models, and fruity lighting. Just don't expect to be awestruck by any intricate world design or over-thetop action.

sound Thankfully the audio doesn't take itself too seriously. Some corny comments from your soldier during missions keeps things light.

controls The coverbased mechanics work well provided you have the drop on your enemies. Trying to stay accurate in an open firefight can feel a little wayward.

REPLAY VALUE CO-

op modes and Daily Challenges will ensure that those willing to look past the design deficiencies will have no shortage of cliché terrorists to chew through. Plenty of perks to unlock, too.

Verdict

Intentionally simple game; design is a bit too shallow.



FIFA Football

The newly-crowned king of pocket soccer



Play this if you like

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA
GENRE: SPORT
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-22 (ONLINE)
RRP: \$69.95

A ll those lonely train rides will never be the same. EA has successfully shrunk FIFA into a rich, technically brilliant version for your pocket. Not only is it visually comparable to its PS3 papa, but it plays brilliantly.

To sum it up, FIFA Football is FIFA 12 with a few smart design modifications and apt throwbacks to FIFA 11. The love-it-or-hate-it Tactical Defending from 12 has been smartly omitted, as it was no doubt considered too fiddly for the Vita's smaller sticks, leaving the more automated Legacy

Defending the only option.
Consequently the other new trick featured in FIFA 12's locker, Precision Dribbling, now feels less potent.

However the biggest changes pertain to the new touch screen controls. While it requires time to get used to, launching pinpoint strikes on the extremities of the goal using the rear pad is strangely satisfying. If anything, it's now too easy to score around the box. The front touch screen controls aren't as convincing. While you can tap the screen to choose where you want to pass the ball, it's clumsy. You'll stick with the buttons instead.

Ironically the biggest problem with FIFA Football is also its biggest strength: it's just like the version on PS3. Which you've already played. And bought! Much like the perfect Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3 port, fans must question whether they're prepared to pay for another hit of FIFA's fine footballing son — even when its the best handheld representation of the sport ever made.

James Ellis

Final Say

PRESENTATION Apart from some missing animations and the odd frame-rate stutter, it's a chip off the old block. Very impressive.

SOUND The latest commercial tracks and lush commentary ported over from *FIFA 12*.

CONTROLS Holding the PS Vita so you don't accidentally bump the rear touch pad takes some adjustment, but overall it's as tight as its little sticks

REPLAY VALUE Many Vita owners will only ever own this game. Career mode and online features mean you'll play it until you get sick of if. Then you'll heal up and play it again. No Ultimate Team though.

Verdict

It might not offer the freshest experience, but the greatest sports game in the world is now

world is now a permanent accessory.





Escape Plan

As narrow as escapes can get



Punching a PS Vita, Crushed

FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: PUZZLE RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: SONY DEVELOPER: FUN BITS INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$19.95

itttingly, this is a Vita game one should make plans to escape from. Not at all costs, perhaps, but certainly until it gets a big PlayStation Plus discount.

It pains us to say it; but all the talented producers behind Fat Princess have delivered here is yet another soulless showcase of the Vita's fandangle functions.

It's by no means an artless failure, though. Guiding dual protagonists Lil and Laarg through stylishly minimalist, monochromatic mayhem can, at least initially, be quite endearing. Enacting their exodus is done purely via a variety of touchscreen pokes and swipes. In the



earlier, trap-lite levels this control system works just fine, but reach the later trails (that look like one of the Jigsaw killer's wet dreams), and the chaining of moves is frustration-filled. Split-second timing soon becomes expected of you and it's hard to consistently achieve it when you're pinching the rear touchpad, stabbing the screen and furiously tilting the Vita, all at once.

There is charm and a few isolated good ideas here (such as coffee as a speed power-up and farting as a means to float your inflated-self lower), but Escape Plan feels way too barebones an experience.

There aren't many gamers out there who'll want to revisit and three star puzzles they barely fumbled through the first time due to iffy controls. But the biggest heist Escape Plan tries to get away with is delivering a game fit for a smartphone at treble the price. There's your diabolical meta-trap, right there. - Adam Mathew

Final Say

PRESENTATION The hest part of this game. Cutesy meets death in the best way possible

SOUND An eclectic mix of wacky sfx and classical music

CONTROLS Not broken just very demanding and much too imprecise.

REPLAY VALUE Slim to none. Getting full marks is even more frustrating.

Verdict

Plan unrealised. Short and plagued with annoving control issues.





F1 2011

Needs vroom to grow

Play this if you like

F1 2012, Gran Turismo

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO **DEVELOPER: SUMO DIGITAL** PLAYERS: 1-4

GENRE: RACING RELEASE: NOW **BANDAI PARTNERS**

RRP: \$69.95

here's a point not long after F1 2011 loads up where you realise that you're just following the green and red racing line, doing your best to stay on track and not pinball your way around the circuit. While it often feels like you're tied to the optimal course, without it you'd be spasming on barriers and have the dour pit chief mumbling in your ear.

The Al have the same mentality most of the time, when they're not either colliding with each other or oddly shooting off the corners. Start out as a novice and the main challenge you'll

have in wrestling your way to the front is timing when you'll overtake the pack in front of you, as the Al don't employ racing tactics. It's mighty odd that a first-year driver signed to a team that doesn't raise headlines can sail by most of them.

That said, while we were adjusting to the slightly over-responsive controls we clipped a few tires and wings on the way. Handily, even on the middle difficulty setting, the stewards are fairly forgiving.

Although the bulk of the package is the PS3 version (disappointingly minus the enticing 'live the life' aspect) the brand new 'Challenges' mode is probably best suited to the handheld. Instead of full-blown races, you're given bite-sized. er, challenges to overcome, such as overtaking as many cars as possible in a certain amount of time, or navigating a slalom course, and so on. They're genuinely more enticing than a full career.

In the end the experience of piloting an F1 car around the world's premiere race tracks isn't here. This is one racer than gets the black and white flag for bad behaviour. Paul Taylor



Final Say

PRESENTATION Great

frame rate but poor textures across the board diluted our enthusiasm.

SOUND Tinny and lacking

CONTROLS Twitchy at first, and bizarrely the touchscreen's barely implemented.

REPLAY VALUE

There's lots to do and the challenges are great.

Verdict

luck next year.

Patient gamers may forgive its technical shortfalls, but we doubt it's going to win any new fans. Better









Rayman Origins

It's a little Ray of sunshine

Play this if you like

Earthworm Jim HD

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA
GENRE: PLATFORMER
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT
MONTPELLIER
DI AUFDE: 1

PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$69.95 he toughest thing about any new console launch is rarely the hardware. More so, will there be anything decent to play on it? Sure Uncharted: Golden Abyss shines brightly but what will one use to whittle away the hours once Drake's day is done? Put down the guns and strap on a pair of sneakers as Rayman Origins is bound to keep you hopping, skipping and jumping along for quite some time.

Basically a port of the console version of the same named game, *Rayman Origins* is a perfect addition to Vita's launch line-up and a hoot and a half to play through. After upsetting a local crone with unseemly snoring Rayman must brave the evil hordes she sends his way using

a combination of stupid-dope kung-fu moves and perfectly timed jumping skills.

It translates well to the handheld, though with the exception of the sporadic tap to uncover hidden items and pinching the screen to zoom in or out of the action the touch screen barely breaks a sweat. There are plenty of obscured and secret areas to revisit especially for those trophy hounds out there and the gameplay is as addictive as it comes with a decidedly old-school feel.

The omission of four-player cooperative play (as seen in its PS3 counterpart) hurts and seems a bit of an oversight but that doesn't stop it from being a damned fine platformer. Rayman Origins looks a treat, plays pretty sweet and walks its own beat. Dave Kozicki

Final Sav

PRESENTATION Looked gorgeous on console and possibly even better on Vita.

SOUND Great guitar twangs and all manner of guirky effects.

CONTROLS Easy as pie with only scant uses of the touch screen.

REPLAY VALUE

Decent with plenty of collectibles to bunt down

Verdict

A ridiculously addictive new school take on old school platforming.

8

Shinobido 2: Revenge of Zen

Everything is clearly not zen

Play this if you like

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA
GENRE: STEALTH ACTION
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS
DEVELOPER: ACQUIRE
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$69.95

or a game that boasts a walking cat GIF combined with random fortune cookie-like advice on the loading screen, *Shinobido 2* doesn't kick off with the best of starts. When it took 10 minutes before we even got to interact with the game, the expectation level was well and truly set. *Revenge of Zen* follows the plight of titular ninja Zen who, as you might expect, is out to cook the dish best served cold. After a bout with text-heavy tutorials, we were thrown into the deep end of a surprisingly layered game.

What could easily have been a straightforward stealth title is smattered

with RPG elements, allegiance pledging, an inventory and a variety of tools to make you feel totally ninja. In fact, it's best to play this game as a shadow-loving ninja as there's little enjoyment to be found in trying to slash your way through missions. There are some good ideas at play here, particularly in relation to the Vita's touchscreen functionality, but they also tend to go awry.

Touching the front screen to monitor what enemies are in your line of sight is a nice touch, but using the rear touchscreen to aim meant we were often being dragged out of third-person mode accidentally. When a well-planned incursion comes to fruition, the game is rewarding; the rest of the time, it's plagued with camera weirdness, clipping errors and a clunky combat system. Nathan Lawrence



Final Say

PRESENTATION Some

nice camera models during cut-scenes, but mostly blocky presentation.

SOUND It gets the job done, but doesn't offer much more

CONTROLS Not exactly optimised for the Vita, but satisfactory for the stalking type.

REPLAY VALUE

Depending on your campaign allegiances, there is some replay value here, but you'd be doing well to get through it once.

Verdict

The rewarding stealthy moments are too few and far between for this buggy title.







Touch My Katamari

Caution: touching katamaris may kill

Play this if you like

LittleBigPlanet

Info FORMAT- PS VITA

GENRE: PUZZLE RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$69.95

iven the popularity of simplistic cutesy titles such as LittleBiqPlanet. it's surprising that Touch My Katamari wasn't able to evoke a similar feeling of childlike wonder. The Mighty Boosh meets Glee meets Monty Python-style intro paves the way for the unique look of the game, but the mostly terrible comedy falls well short of the type of consistent chuckles required to retain gamer attention.

The codpiece-wearing vellow spandex-adorned King of All Cosmos tasks the player with rolling around a sticky ball (called a Katamari) and collecting as many items as possible. While you can use the sticks to move the ball and camera, it's clear that the developers want you to rub your fingers across the Vita's front touchscreen.

Thankfully, the controls are simple enough and the rear touchscreen can be used to stretch and flatten the Katamari. But it's best to just stick to the front touchscreen as trying to hold the Vita while working both screens is a Trophyworthy venture in itself. Unfortunately, the mostly effective touchscreen control mechanic does little to add depth to an incredibly rinse-and-repeat title.

In many ways, Touch my Katamari feels more like game for your phone than a Vita title: incredibly accessible, yet designed for small bursts only. The longer you play. the more you'll notice graphics pop — even on smaller levels — and the annoying DJ scratching that stands as an audio placeholder for real dialogue.

Nathan Lawrence

Final Say

PRESENTATION Quirky LittleBigPlanet-type style is jarred by graphics pop-in.

SOUND DJ scratching dialogue is enough to make you skip every line of socalled dialoque.

CONTROLS Touch controls are incredibly responsive. just don't bring the rear screen into play.

REPLAY VALUE This is a game best played in short hursts but you can revisit levels to improve your score.

Verdict

With a number of superior Vita launch titles to

choose from, there are few reasons to go for this.

Lumines: Electronic Symphony

It's time to rock down to Electric Avenue

Something more challenging than Tetris

FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: PUZZLE RELEASE: NOW DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT DEVELOPER: 0 ENTERTAINMENT PLAYERS: 1-2 RRP: \$69.95

he Ministry of Sound Chillout Sessions tunes casually greeting you when you kick off Lumines: Electronic Symphony, all but convincing you you're lazing around on the couch on a Sunday afternoon are a trap. It's a devilishly devious ploy by the developers to lull you into a false sense of security before your brain and nimble fingers are assaulted. Tetris is for pussies. Lumines is hardcore.

Lumines: Electronic Symphony is tough. Even in the early stages you'll need to stay on your toes. Dual coloured blocks drop in clusters of four at increasing speeds and you need to arrange like colours together to make them disappear. The twist is that unlike its great grand-pappy Tetris the blocks break up and keep dropping if there's nothing below them adding a whole new strategic element to the fold.

New to the franchise is the shuffle block that re-arranges any formation it touches (both a blessing and a curse) and unlockable avatars with abilities that you can use via the touch screen during games. There are multiple single and versus modes for any occasion including a timed round if you've only got a few minutes up your sleeve. The frantic pacing doesn't really suit extended touch screen use, though you can at your own peril.

Very few games have the capacity to go from frustrating and infuriating to magical and sublime in the space

of a few heartbeats (particularly when you get into a Zen state of mind and everything literally falls into place) but Lumines: Electronic Symphony walks that tightrope beautifully. Grab a copy now. - Dave Kozicki

Final Say

PRESENTATION Keeps it interesting by changing schemes to match the music and level ups.

SOUND Awesomely smooth grooves.

CONTROLS Easier to not use the touch screen at all baring avatar power-ups

REPLAY VALUE Off the

Verdict

Painfully difficult to walk away from if you get on a roll, simplicity itself if you're not. Kiss your spare time goodbye.







Dungeon Hunter: Alliance

Gives new meaning to bland



A poor imitation of Diablo

FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: RPG RELEASE: NOW DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT DEVELOPER: GAMELOFT PLAYERS: 1-4 RRP: \$69.95

ot since *Dynasty Warriors* have we mashed and jammed attack buttons so relentlessly and without any meaning or feeling. Dungeon Hunter: Alliance isn't exactly flying the flag for the PS Vita. It's not entirely its fault. When you're a reasonable iOS title ported over to PSN and now ported over to the Vita there's bound to be a little something lost in translation.

This is the usual 'save the world from evil' type action RPG in the most blasé way possible. Combat is erratic, imprecise and frustrating. Enemies take chunks of your health off and you'll be stocking up on potions like a madman just to make it

through each area.

Seriously, by the end of the second dungeon we'd already lost total interest. You've got a fairy companion travelling alongside you with a special magical attack you can use via the touch screen. She also uncovers buried treasure for you by blinking irritatingly when close in the most infuriating way possible. It's so annoying that you'll forgo the chance of loot just to shut her up.

Considering you can buy it on PSN for a fraction of the asking price on PS Vita, it does make Dungeon Hunter: Alliance a bitter pill that's more than a little hard to swallow. If it was a title bursting with frantic and unbelievable gameplay in a wondrous magical world it might get a pass, but that's far from the case here. Dodge this like month-old milk. 🎝 Dave Kozicki



Final Say

PRESENTATION Average at best and that's being generous

SOUND Entertaining score let down by terrible voice acting

CONTROLS Chinky and super repetitive.

REPLAY VALUE Plenty to do including four player coop, but would you want to?

Verdict

to rot.

Trite, boring and not at all compelling. Don't even bother waiting for it to hit the hargain hin. just leave it

Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3

Now offers the ability to finger your way to victory



Streeties, but not Tekko

Info FORMAT: PS VITA

GENRE: FIGHTING RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: THO DEVELOPER: CAPCOM PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$69.95

t seems only right that every handheld launch is accompanied by a fighting game. And when it comes to fighting titles. Capcom sure know how to do it right. In all fairness, there's not much here that's different from the PlayStation 3 version: if you've played that to death already, you won't need to play this. Then again, that's not really going to stop the fans from picking up this treat.

But it's the Vita-specific features that may well entice new players to the otherwise hardcore fighting series. The lower difficulty settings actually let you

dominate in fights on the easy setting (and there's 'very easy', too), unlike easy on Street Fighter IV, while a wholly touchscreen fighting mode lets you

finger your enemies to death. It's not the best way to play the game, but it means that even the greenest newbie can win a fight without having to remember increasingly complex combat commands.

Alas, the training is less than ideal, considering you constantly have to break in and out of gameplay to check the command list. Technically, moves can be learnt by playing through the 'missions' mode, but it seems to be out of place and makes training somewhat redundant. Result? Play to learn.

Ultimately, these gripes pale in comparison to this beautiful-looking game that boasts fast loading times and the perfect formula for short-session gaming fixes. If you've been too scared to try the series before or just love fighting games, this is a great title to add to your collection. A Nathan Lawrence

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Beautiful comic-book rendering with fast loading

SOUND They've chosen voice actors wisely and you'll feel the hits of your super combos

CONTROLS Touchscreen fight mode is a nice inclusion, while traditional controls translate well, too.

REPLAY VALUE You don't need to finish this type of game to want to come back for more.

Verdict

newcomers.

It may be rehashed material, but it's done so well that it's an easy pick for fans of the genre or curious



Super Stardust Delta

Social life black hole detected

uper Stardust HD blasted our expectations when it warped onto PS3 in 2007. So much so, returning to the series on PS Vita felt like a happy homecoming.

Just as we remembered it, this features-pimped version looks an absolute treat and its one-more-go nature still ensures every session will be played until the battery runs dry.

Delta features a wide selection of all-new modes to mix up the asteroid annihilation and some subtle, yet

useful, integration of the PS Vita gyro, twin stick and touch controls. Special attacks like black holes and missile barrages can be brought to bear by tapping the touchscreen or rear touchpad, and a shake of the Vita delivers an EMP attack.

You wouldn't think it, but *Delta* gives *Uncharted: Golden Abyss* a run for its money as the best looking title on the system. Pelting around the screen, slaloming through asteroids and spewing laser death is more

intense and addictive to watch than a staring competition with Hypnotoad.

Speaking of being welded to this game; the biggest hook you'll find with *Delta* is how all-consuming an Arcade mode leaderboard rivalry can become (with the right obsessive company, of course).

Needless to say, Super Stardust Delta represents phenomenal value for the pittance asking price. You'd need space rocks in your head to pass this up. Adam Mathew

Play this if you like

Everyday Shooter

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA
GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER:
HOUSEMARQUEE
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$12,95

Final Say

PRESENTATION A definite showcase for PS Vita. Solid framerate.

SOUND Phat beats and zappy auditory treats.

CONTROLS Flawless twin-stick shooting on a PS handheld? About time.

REPLAY VALUE

Could have done with more modes. Great for score wars though.

Verdict

Amazing value for the price. Our second launch

title choice right after *Uncharted*.





Hustle Kings

FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: SPORTS RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: SONY DEVELOPER: VOOFOO STUDIOS PLAYERS: 1-2 RRP: \$12.95

Pool games never usually click with us. No matter how accurate the simulation is we're always left with the argument: why aren't we playing this for realsies in a bar, with beer?

Hustle Kings certainly doesn't disprove that logic, but it offers a plethora of game rules, trick shot challenges and multiplayer modes, along with an engaging gambling and unlock system. Just as surprising is how decent the graphics and physics are. Cheap thrills aplenty.

Verdict Surprisingly polished and great value for money. Touch controls work rather well, too.





Top Darts

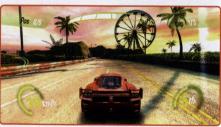
FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: SPORTS RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: SONY DEVELOPER: DEVIL'S DETAILS PLAYERS: 1-10 RRP: \$12.95

Top Darts is a hasty port of the Move enabled PS3 title of the same name. But whereas that peripheral integration made sense, a touchscreen isn't nearly as fun or intuitive.

There are 14 different rule sets to check out, but all of them fall victim to repetition. Gameplay revolves around dragging your finger across the front display to choose the area where you wish to hit, before pulling it down and then flicking. Rinse. Repeat. Woo. Pass.

Verdict Well produced and full of modes, but learning a flick makes you master of the universe too soon.





Asphalt Injection

FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: RACING RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT DEVELOPER: GAMELOFT PLAYERS: 1-8 RRP: \$49.95

As a me-too port of a one dollar iOS app, Asphalt Injection represents the seedier end of the PS Vita racing launch titles.

The closest approximation to it would be *Burnout*-lite, really, as this lacks the polish, pace and wanton pole-axing that defined Criterion's classics. The integration of tilt steering and rear touchpad gear shifting is nice, but beyond that, this is a wafer-thin, learner burner experience best left to racing rookies.

Verdict Painfully middle of the road. Super easy drift mechanic makes this a pushover.





Ridge Racer Vita

"Rijijijdge Racer! It's Ridge Racer!"

he only way this Vita version differentiates itself from the umpteenth Ridge Racers out there is the way it feels like a demo. You only get three cars and five tracks and no solo career. Want more content? Start paying, sucker.

The basic concept is to have all players 'contracted' to one of a number of companies, and to track their wins in a global leaderboard which makes their respective 'Globex Corporation' the king. Problem is,

with the core of gameplay being such a barebones rip-off, who out there will commit to throwing more time and money at winning such a misguided marathon?

We predict the cumulative score war will be dominated by a diehard few and abandoned by everybody else not willing to live within Wi-Fi range (and therefore denied the chance to contribute).

That silly design decision makes solo play feel hollow and worthless.

It's like Namco Bandai forgot that their game was on portable systems that aren't all 3G enabled.

Track-side the courses are bland, and rehashed. The racing is functional, but passionless, and runs at a solid 30 fps (after a patch). The hepped-up-on-red-bull announcer sounds like he's looking at his watch.

In a perfect world this should have been free, or app priced. But as it stands it's way too much for too little. Adam Mathew

play this

Burnout

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: RACING RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: NAMEO PANDAT **DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI** PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$49.95

Final Say

PRESENTATION Looks pretty enough, but you've raced those tracks before. Menus are super-slick

SOUND The usual J-pop techno. Sexy menu voice. Announcer phones it in.

CONTROLS Non-use of PS Vita's functions. Basically this could have easily been a PSP game

REPLAY VALUE Depends. really. Lots if you're online and good. Sweet budger all if you're a soloist without Wi-Fi.

Verdict

A failed experiment. Only fun for a diehard few.



FORMAT: PS VITA, PS3 GENRE: RACING RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: SONY DEVELOPER: EVOLUTION STUDIOS PLAYERS: 1-4 RRP: \$9.95

Forget all you think you know about the name MotorStorm. Unlike the other titles in the series this a faux-top-down race between tiny RC cars. Mashed is the closest approximation.

The solo content is phenomenal value for money and the cross-play with PS3 works insanely well. One price gets you both versions and they share players and results. Couple that with an seamless Autolog-style challenge system and this is a must-buy.

Verdict Two games for the price of practically nothing? Hell yes. Simple, elegant and addictive.





FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: PLATFORM RELEASE: OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR**: DRINKBOX STUDIOS **DEVELOPER**: DRINKBOX STUDIOS PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$11.45

Part Katamari, part Loco Roco is the simplest way to describe this platformer, where the point is to control a mutant blob who escapes from the lab. It's a delightful romp while it lasts and is fairly inventive too, as you need to interact with the screen to move platforms around whilst timing a number of taxing jumps, before you become a magnet to propel over laser beams, or even transform into a jetpack. Magic.

Verdict Great value despite its brevity and funny too. More charming than Michael Parkinson.





Michael Jackson The Experience HD

FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: MUSIC RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT DEVELOPER: TRIUMPH PLAYERS: 1-2 RRP: \$39.95

Much like the King of Pop's life, this game ends much sooner than it should and we're all the poorer for it. To play you'll need to tap, slide and doodle (as in: drawing) your way through 15 of MJ's greatest hits. You can easily lose a few hours stabbing your Vita to Smooth Criminal, Thriller and Beat It.

It sucks then, that those hours (two of them) represent the entire runtime of this. You'd have to be on 'the Jesus juice' to get this full price.

Verdict Classy for the most part. Content is way too threadbare for the price, however.





Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus

What's old is...newish again

or the skim readers out there; there are two ninja launch titles for Vita. This one cuts the other one a new butt crack. End of review.

Those of you with more time should know that *Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus* is an upgraded, more definitive version of *Ninja Gaiden Black*, a game so notoriously hard it caused a rash of suicides at Team Ninja's playtesting facilities. Probably.

A 'new' element being touted in this version is Rachel – the very

improbably-chested heroine — being a playable character for short periods. This is odd because she was clearly in the PS3 version.

Meanwhile, the Vita functions have been put to both good and average use. The good: tapping onscreen enemies to unleash shurikens and arrows. The meh: ninpo magic has been hastily tacked onto the rear touchpad which is a pain to access when your very life depends on it. And it will. Many, many times.

Beyond that, not a lot has been changed. The visuals are crisp enough but hide their age like a discount facelift. And nobody thought to re-record the cheeseball VOs.

But the biggest shame is that the camera is still too tight and too low. Couple that with brutal checkpoints and this may send novice folk insane.

Sigma Plus is a rushed, but mostly robust, remake. The 'Plus' in the title is largely a ninja deception tactic.

Adam Mathew

Play this if you like

Your games difficult and your swears yelled, God of War

Info

FORMAT: PS VITA
GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
DEVELOPER: TEAM NINJA
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$59.95

Final Say

PRESENTATION Looks sharp on Vita, but the cutscenes and level elements like trees are soon 2004

SOUND B-Grade story and acting. Sweet "ka-shings".

CONTROLS Melee action is tight. Ninpo use is hampered, not helped, by the rear touchpad.

REPLAY VALUE Replay? Many of you won't get through this on the hardest difficulty.

Verdict

This is a solid, if no-frills, port that is still worth revisiting.





The Simpsons Arcade Game

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: BEAT 'EM UP RELEASE:
OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: KONAMI DEVELOPER:
KONAMI PLAYERS: 1 - 4 RRP: \$15.95

At its core this is Konami's Ninja Turtles beat 'em up re-skinned for Matt Groening's cash. But whereas everybody gets a rad turtle in *TMNT*, one poor bastard in every four player posse gets stuck with Marge and a vacuum.

This is standard arcade fare; short duration, high frustration. Mastering enemy patterns and nabbing a trophy pertaining to the use of finite credits takes skill and timing. Not the best beat 'em up ever, but a good half an hour of fun.

Verdict Nowhere near as radical as we remember it. Still, it's quite fun with four players.





BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: FIGHTING RELEASE: OUT

FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: FIGHTING RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: TUFFKAT DEVELOPER: ARC SYSTEM WORKS PLAYERS: 1-2 RRP: \$69.95

Have the fortitude to wade through the weird and you'll find an amazingly complex and rewarding fighting game here. The brawlers are colourful enough to make Joseph and his dream-coat look like goth chic, but their best feature is how utterly unique their tactics are.

It sucks then that not much has been added from the PS3 versions and, unlike Capcom's launch efforts, almost no time was spent on making use of Vita's functions.

Verdict Heavily recycled from the PS3 version, but still one of the most rewarding 2D fighters around.





Dynasty Warriors Next

FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: ACTION RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: THQ DEVELOPER: TECMO KOEI PLAYERS: 1-4 RRP: \$49.95

Ahhh, *Dynasty Warriors* series. If you want to test out the durability of your Vita's face buttons, accept no substitutes. Mash-tastic.

You can also rely on it to be not very evolutionary, at all. You're still mindlessly hacking 'n' slashing your way through clones, but now you'll also engage in mini-games that use the gyro and touchscreen in very inelegant ways.

Fans will love this, many others will scratch their heads and wonder how it keeps selling.

Verdict If you've played one *Dynasty Warriors* game, you've played this. Solid if uninspired.





I'M TAKING THE BUS HOME, AND THE TROPHY.

THE WORLD IS IN PLAY.





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internet

NEWS, DLC, REVIEWS

WHAT'S NEW

PSN

DEVELOPMENTS

What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

mericans have understandably been voicing their anger over the price of Mass Effect 3's DLC. Websites like Destructiod pointed out that it would cost someone US\$870 to own all of the ME3 DLC available on day one of release. The good news is that isn't the case for Australians. The bad news is it'd cost us more like \$925 because of the higher price of games down under.

Before you start fire-bombing your local EA office, \$925 isn't the sticker price for purely DLC content, it's such a high price because of a number of optional bonus items that are only available by purchasing merchandise like figurines. If you spend \$130 on the N7 Collector's Edition of the game and buy the From Dust DLC pack (expected to be \$15) you'll own all of the critical DLC. The other \$780 will net you a handful of optional weapon and power-up DLC items but you'll need to buy some ridiculous extras like a \$200 headset. Our advice: just stick to the Collector's Edition.

Speaking of Collector's Editions, for those of you lucky *Call of Duty* Elite Premium members there are a handful of new *Modern Warfare 3* maps for you to riddle with bullets. The Piazza and Liberation maps were released in February. Piazza is all about tight



alleys thanks to its Italian setting, whereas Liberation unleashes warfare across New York's Central Park.
There's also a third map, Overwatch joining the action on 29 March.

After more than a decade Jet Set Radio is finally set to roll onto a PlayStation via PSN in mid-2012. The 2000 Dreamcast original is being remastered by SEGA as Jet Set Radio HD. For those unfamiliar, JSR sees you speeding around on rollerblades, evading police as you pull off tricks and tag locations with graffiti. Head to SEGA's website as well if you'd like to enter a competition to help design some of the game's new graffiti art.



VIDZONE PLAYLIST SPOTLIGHT



DRAPHT - SING IT (THE LIFE OF RILEY)

Aussie hip-hop sensation proclaims the joy of people singing along to great songs. We can't keep up.



LANA DEL RAY -VIDEO GAMES

Ironically we don't see one game at all in her vid. Bummer. Still, the song'll set you up for an ace weekend.



NERO-PROMISES

2011, the year of dubstep. Like or loathe it (or just think it's overdone) you'll see from this vid why he did some of the Syndicate soundtrack.

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available free on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 13,000 music videos at the push of a button!



PlayStation_®Network

ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS



VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION

One of the finest brawlers from the last gen is yours to download. It's the definitive version of the game, and while it's aged, for \$15.95 it's a bargain.



GOD HAND

Flat-out one of the most batshit insane games ever. This action beat-'em-up with customisable attacks came from the same studio that made *Okami*. You've never seen anything like it.



RESIDENT EVIL 2

Free for a limited time for PS Plus subscribers, this is Leon Kennedy's and Claire Redfield's origin story. It's quite a sprawling adventure, though the controls might grate.



NARUTO SHIPPUDEN: ULTIMATE NINJA STORM GENERATIONS -DEMO

Sweet anime action. You'll be blown away by the visuals animation.



FIFA STREET - DEMO

We played it, and office opinion is divided (see page 68 for our football expert's review). Grab this demo and try out the fancy footwork for yourself, as it's based on the titanic FIFA 12.

WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



ROPHY LIVES

You love games so much you may as well be hitched to them. Here's what you did to get your beloved trophies



Leon Harris Game: Tekken Tag Tournament HD Trophy: Throwing Rocks!

Scored over 200 in Tekken Bowl Made my son

happy as I wouldn't let him have a turn until I got the damn thing!



Callum Barrett Game: Skyrim Trophy: Platinum Trophy



Took me about 150 hours, but after much

adventuring and dragon slaying I finally succeeded!



Desmond James Wilson Game: Battlefield: BC2 Trophy: Bad Company Elite



Not the hardest to achieve, but definitely one for

all the Battlefield junkies to be proud of.



GENRE: ACTION RELEASE: NOW DISTRIBUTOR: THQ DEVELOPER: VOLITION INC PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$6.99

DLC >

Saints Row: The Third -**Gangstas in Space**

A chapter with gravity

t should come as no surprise that any DLC from the gang that gave you a scary-long purple dildo as a melee weapon would be a little on the nutty side. Saints Row: The Third keeps cementing itself as GTA directed by Michael Bay with outrageous scenarios, massive explosions, sexy sidekicks and only the faintest touch of a coherent plot and this latest offering Gangstas in Space is no exception.

As the Third Street Saint's head honcho, you're quite the hot

commodity. So much so that an incredibly douchey director by the name of Andy Zhen wants to shoot a big budget old school Sci-Fi epic with you as the star. It all starts off rather sedately but soon there's more carnage, destruction and madness, and you can't help but get caught up in it all.

As soon as Andy yells "action" you'll be overwhelmed with the epic Hollywood blockbuster backing tracks, over-the-top action and crazy improvised scenes while you're doing your best to survive till the next shot. All your 'pew-pew' lasers have unlimited ammo so you can run and gun like a madman regardless of how far you've progressed in the single player campaign and the grainy film stock vision really helps to completely immerse you in this wacky experience.

VERDICT

Big, dumb and stupid fun with a 1950s Sci-Fi feel to it, all at a bargain basement price. Addictive.



⋙ PlayStation_®Network

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE



CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 3 DEVELOPER: INFINITY WARD/ SLEDGEHAMMER GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-16 Take MW2 and add in some insanely addictive contracts multiplayer proper. Solid shooter fun and tonnes of DLC inbound.



DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO

Excellent. You'll spend most Tag and Trailblazer, and while addictive. Believe us when we



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

DEVELOPER: CAPC PLAYERS: 1-4 (remember those?) when you had a bunch of lads and lasses your quarter-circle technique



FIFA 12 DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS PLAYERS: 1-22

Shooters aren't the only games that need explicit tactics, and brilliant with 11 versus 11 matches. smooth as last year's effort



BATTLEFIELD 3

PLAYERS: 1-24

You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction and storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics. Team matches have little room for lone wolves, so play friendly or don't play at all

TRANSCEND HISTORY AND THE WORLD

SoulCalibur V

Cut to the chase and unlock all the best stuff in this, the greatest weapons-based fighter we've ever played. Also, learn the sneakiest ways to assassinate as Ezio...

Unlockable List

Character Unlocks

Algol: Reach Player Level 31, or finish Story Mode to unlock CPU Algol for other modes and then defeat him using one of the following methods based on your current Player Level

Any Player Level: Win Legendary Souls Player Level 12: Play Quick Battle and find player TERAMOS by changing Search Criteria to Area = Europe, Opponent Strength = Intermediate, and Battle Record Status = New Opponents First. Refresh the Search List until you see TERAMOS

Player Level 17: Play Arcade Extra Route, Difficulty Easy and choose Maxi. Algol should be your 4th or 5th opponent

Alpha Patroklos: Finish Episode 12 of Story Mode or reach Player Level 15

Devil Jin CAS fighting style: Reach Player Level 5, or defeat player Harada_ TEKKEN in Quick Battle. (change Search Criteria to Area = Asia, Opponent Strength = Advanced, Battle Record Status = New Opponents First. Refresh the Search List till you find him.)

Edge Master: Finish Episode 16 of Story Mode, or reach Player Level 19

Elysium: Complete Story Mode, or reach Player Level 27

Kilik: Reach Player Level 9, or defeat CPU Kilik. (Legendary Souls, or Arcade Asia

Pyhrra Omega: Finish Episode 19 of Story Mode, or reach Player Level 23

Stage Unlocks

Astral Chaos: Crossing Points: Reach Player Level 25

Ancient Citadel: Peacetime: Finish Episode 4 in Story mode or reach Player

Astral Chaos: Pathway: Reach Player

Conqueror's Coliseum: Underground Fight: Reach Player Level 13

Denever Castle: Eye of Chaos: Unlock Omega Pyrrha

Denever Castle: Assault: Finish Episode 18 in Story mode or reach Player level 18 Last Rites on the Battleground: Finish Episode 18 in Story mode or reach Player Level 40

Penitentiary of Destiny: Unlock Kilik **Tower of Glory: Most Holy** Dichotomy: Unlock Angol

Tower of Glory: Spiral of Good and Evil: Unlock Edgemaster

Unknown Forest: Dark Night: Finish Episode 7 in Story mode or reach Player level 21

Utopia of the Blessed: Unlock Elysium

Weapon Unlocks

Extra Weapon for Natsu: Finish Episode 15 of Story Mode

Extra Weapon for Nightmare: Finish Episode 11 of Story Mode

Extra Weapon for Patroklos: Finish Episode 4 of Story Mode

Extra Weapon for Pyhrra: Finish Episode 19 of Story Mode

Extra Weapon for Xiba: Finish Episode 15 of Story Mode

Extra Weapon for all other

chars: Reach Player Level 9 Joke Weapons for all

chars: Reach Player Level 53

Master Weapons for all

chars: Reach Player

Level 25

Ultimate Weapons for all chars: Reach Player

Level 42

Games Mode Unlocks

Legendary Souls: Complete

Story Mode

Arcade Extra Route: Reach

Player Level 17

Raise Your Player Level to 99 Quickly

Turbo Controller: Set your OK button to B attack. Play Quick Battle as Mitsurugi against any low rank (E5) opponent. Hold down OK button and come back hours later. Estimated time to reach Level 99: 15 - 20 hours. Booyah.

No Turbo Controller: Keep fighting low rank (E5) opponents in Quick Battle and win as fast as you can, also using Critical Edges when possible. Spamming Aeon's Ring Out combos is the fastest method.





Ezio Guide

General Tips for assassins

Ezio is a fairly easy and enjoyable character to play with. However, his ease of play sacrifices his general power. But most of all, like many other characters in the game, Ezio's biggest problem is his reach. Make sure to stay in stab-range of biggerreach players like Astaroth, Ivy and Nightmare.



Horizontals

Here are our three main go-to horizontal attacks. Forward A B B strikes high-high-mid and knocks down your target. Back-Down A takes a bit get going and hits at low, but there's a chance to put a secondary attack in there if it's countered. Back A B hits high and fires a crossbow bolt for the double tap. Extend the combo with a low crossbow shot or a Sidestep B attack.

Verticals

Ezio specialises in Vertical attacks. B B is a great one-two, but use it with a Brave Edge and it'll turn into a four hit Unblockable attack. Forward B snakes out quickly and hits at high level, but once again, infuse it with a Brave Edge to turn it into a Break Attack with two low crossbow shots. Forward-Down B is a handy mid poke that excels in disrupting incoming throws and it also puts enemies on their arse. Back B is another good throw thwarter and propels Ezio in for a mid hit.





Kicks

Forward-Down K strikes out at mid and will get an enemy out of your face quickly. Back-Down K is another belt to the midsection but this time it's a handy launcher. Those looking to knock down opponents should rely on Ezio's Jump K.

Simultaneous Press

A+B is a nifty tackle aimed at the midsection and can be sugarcoated with a low crossbow bolt from a Sidestep B. A quick knockdown can be accessed through Down A+B and B+K is a punishing Unblockable, if you have the range and time to bust it out.

Eight Way Run

Forward-Run A B is a surprisingly effective mid slice that becomes a high crossbow shot. You can change that combo up by tapping down just before the Vertical attack. Sidestep-Run A A unleashes two respectable mid cuts, but with Brave Edge it sneaks in an additional Unblockable Break Attack. Those looking to counter throws ought to look to Sidestep-Run B.



MUST WATCH

Drive (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: NICOLAS WINDING REFN STARRING: RYAN GOSLING, CAREY MULLIGAN, BRYAN CRANSTON, CHRISTINA HENDRICKS, ALBERT BROOKS, RON PEARLMAN AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

After the brutal and art house styling of Valhalla Rising, director Refn brings his poignant pacing and introspective moments to Drive with his trademark explosions of uber-violence for good measure. A struggling stuntman and getaway driver (Gosling) finds himself in a heap of trouble when he tries to help his neighbour out of a sticky situation with a local kingpin. Brian Cranston (the dad from Malcolm in the Middle) does a convincing turn as Driver's steadfast pal who's always looking for a quick buck, and Albert Brooks is a chilling crime boss trying to appease a psychotic Ron Pearlman. All are playing against type in what is quite possibly Ryan Gosling's finest performance outside of The Ides of March. While the first act plods after an explosive opening, Drive quickly revs up in the second act.

Watch this if you like Bullitt

Verdict

Beautifully measured with a great 1980s inspired look and soundtrack. A film-lover's film.







The Thing (MAIS+)

DIRECTOR: MATTHIJS VAN HEIJNINGEN JR. CAST: MARY ELIZABETH WINSTEAD, JOEL EDGERTON, ULRICH THOMSEN AVAILABLE: (RENT/OWN) \$ 6.99/\$32.99 4902MB (HD)/(RENT/OWN) \$ 5.99/24.99, 1270MB (SD)

A research group in Antartica discovers an alien craft and one of its frozen occupants. However, the creature comes back to life and starts to imitate the crew, making it near impossible to tell friend from foe.

There are a few problems with this prequel to John Carpenter's great movie, also called *The Thing*, but the biggest is that it's irrelevant. Nearly everything that happens is better presented in the

1982 original, and with a much better ending.

What it does do remarkably well is show off the monster in glorious, terrifying detail that rubber masks in the late 20th Century could not do.

Verdict Carpenter's original did it better than this 20 years ago. Really good effects though.



PlayStation_® Store ®

Movies on Demand



- What's Your Number?
 20th Century Fox.
- 2 The Thing (2011) Universal Pictures
- 3 Everything Must Go Madman Entertainment
- 4 Horrible Bosses
 Warner Bros
- 5 Cowboys & Aliens
 Dreamworks
- The Bodyguard Warner Bros.
- 7 The Help Touchstone
- 8 Bad Teacher Sony Pictures
 - Captain America: The First Avenger Paramount Pictures
- 10 Crazy, Stupid, Love Warner Bros.

Now available to rent or own on PlayStation® Store The PlayStation Network Video Store offers hundreds of titles available to rent or own at the click of a button!



stice League: Doom (PG)

DIRECTOR: LAUREN MONTGOMERY CAST: KEVIN CONROY, PHIL MORRIS, CLAUDIA BLACK AVAILABLE

Everybody knows that Batman keeps a bit of Kryptonite in his utility belt just in case Superman ever goes crazy and tries to kill everyone. This straight-to-DVD film is based on the premise that Bats also has contingency plans for all the other members of the Justice League... and that a super-villain manages to get his hands on them. Andrea Romano overseas a truly stellar voice cast, including Kevin 'Arkham City' Conroy as the World's Greatest Detective, though there are noticeable flaws – not least the jarring pace, thanks to a story that jumps between six drawnout simultaneous fight scenes. The all-digital 2D animation also looks a little off in places.

Watch this if you like Justice League: Crisis on Two Earths, Batman: Year One

Verdict Batman learns you really can be your own worst enemy in this super-villain smack-down.



Immortals (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: TARSEM SINGH STARRING: HENRY CAVILL, MICKEY ROURKE, STEPHEN DORFF, FRIEDA PINTO, JOHN HURT, LUKE EVANS, JOSEPH MORGAN AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

Testing the waters of Henry Cavill's popularity for the upcoming Superman adaptation comes Immortals. The evil King Hyperion (Rourke) is after an ancient weapon of unfathomable power to let loose the Titans to lay the smack down on Zeus and the inhabitants of Mount Olympus. Only one man can stop them, Zeus' son Theseus (Cavill). Director Tarsem Singh's visual flair is unquestionable with a portfolio boasting ocular orgies such as The Cell and The Fall, but there isn't enough combat peppered through to keep the lackluster plot chugging along. The film does finish strong but you've pretty much lost interest by that point.

Watch this if you like 300

Verdict Too much lead up for far too little payoff. More action, please.





Mardock Scramble: The First Compression (R18+)

DIRECTOR: SUSUMU KUDO CAST: MEGUMI HAYASHIBARA, NORITO YASHIMA, TOMOHIRO WAKI AVAILABLE ON: DVD

A variant of your basic Robocop scenario: A voung woman is brought back from the brink of death and transformed into a cyborg for the sole purpose of taking down the man who murdered her. Only it's not only her body that gets crucified; young Balot is also tormented by memories of her abusive family life, deviant assassins, and the horrors of bureaucratic process. Our gun-toting anti-heroine is aided in her struggle by Oeufcoque, an artificially intelligent shapeshifting talking mouse. Although feature-length, the 'The First Compression' ends on a cliffhanger - two sequel movies are in the works to finish the story.

Watch this if you like Blade Runner, Ghost in the Shell

Verdict A cyber-punk bloodbath with beautiful animation and deeply unsettling sexual content.



In Time (M)

DIRECTOR: ANDREW NICCOL STARRING: JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE, AMANDA SEYFRIED, CILLIAN MURPHY, JOHNNY GALECKI, OLIVIA WILDE AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

In Time is very much a hit and miss affair. Director Andrew Niccol has had past success with The Truman Show and Gattaca, but he also was behind S1mOne. In the future, time is money, literally. Humans are genetically engineered to age until 25 years old, with an additional year before their clocks run out and they die. The wealthy can buy more time living perpetually young while the poorer masses drop like flies around them. When Will Salas finds himself in possession of over 100 years he finds himself on the run from both criminals and Timekeepers (cops) as he figures out the best use for his time left

Watch this if you like The Time Machine

Verdict A solid concept sloppily executed. Constant switches in tone make this a mess.





Sekirei Pure Engagement (Season 2) M

DIRECTOR: KEIZOU KUSAKAWA CAST: MARIA INOUE, SAORI HAYAMI, SHINNOSUKE TACHIBANA AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

A quintessential example of an anime harem show - a series where half a dozen or so young women clamour around a hapless male lead, competing fiercely for his attention and affection. The key point of difference of Sekirei is that this tawdry innuendo is set against the backdrop of a looming geopolitical crisis; each of these busty damsels has supernatural fighting powers, and the fate of the world hangs on who emerges triumphant from their boob-flashing battle royale. This isn't exactly Game of Thrones, however, as all that scheming is secondary to to the light bondage imagery and frequent steamy bath scenes.

Watch this if you like Love Hina, Rosario + Vampire

Verdict A harem show that falls all over itself to get boobs right up in your face.



Game of Thrones Season One (R18+)

DIRECTOR: VARIOUS STARRING: SEAN BEAN, LENA HEADEY, EMILIA CLARKE, PETER DINKLAGE, AIDEN GILLEN, IAIN GLEN, CHARLES DANCE AVAILABLE ON:

Based on the best-selling fantasy novels constituting A Song of Fire and Ice by George R. R. Martin, this series details the power struggle for the Iron Throne of Westeros between seven dynasties and the noble families that sit at the head of each. This HBO series has lavish sets, lashings of violence and nudity but never to the point of gratuity. As each house works tirelessly to gain the upper hand, Game of Thrones manages to weave a rich tapestry of themes addressing honour, duty, courage, loyalty, love, sex, fidelity, betrayal and incest, delivering incredibly entertaining and compelling viewing.

Watch this if you like Rome

Verdict Everyone is talking about this for a reason. A must-watch.



NOW SHOWING

Underworld: Awakening

DIRECTOR: MANS MARLIND, BJORN STEIN STARRING: KATE BECKINSALE, STEPHEN RAE, MICHAEL EALY, INDIA EISLEY, KRIS HOLDEN-RIED, CHARLES DANCE IN CINEMAS: NOW

he *Underworld* franchise has always been popcorn blockbuster fare with kick-arse set pieces, vampires, werewolves (or Lycans) and *Romeo and Juliet* inspired plots stretched as thin as Kate Beckinsale's skin-tight leathers. After her departure from the series lead to an extremely watchable prequel helmed by Rhona Mitra, Beckinsale is back in the driver's seat as take-no-guff death-dealing vampire Selene.

After events at the film's opening leave Selene with a 12-year gap in her life she 'awakens' in a laboratory, breaks free of her captors and escapes to a very different world. Mankind has banded together and declared war on both vampire and Lycan hunting down both species to near extinction.

Still written and overseen by series staple Len Wiseman the directorial duties have been passed on to Marland and Stein who bring the goods visually at the expense of any kind of engaging story. There is very little chemistry across the board and Charles Dance, as vampire clan leader Thomas, is completely underutilised (and an obvious Bill Nighy replacement). Turn your brain off and look at the pretty pictures.

Watch this if you like Pretty but brainless action





The Skin I Live In (MAIS+)

DIRECTOR: PEDRO ALMODOVAR **STARRING:** ANTONIO BANDERAS, ELENA ANAYA, MARISA PAREDES, JAN CORNET **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

If you like to take a little break from the norm and don't get irked by subtitles you'll find *The Skin I Live In* one of the most unique and rewarding films in quite some time. Renowned plastic surgeon Robert Ledgard (Banderas) has just created an incredibly durable and almost impervious to damage synthetic skin by merging human and swine DNA.

Working from his mansion as a recluse he is haunted by a tragic past, namely a horrific car accident that left his beloved wife with burns over 70 per cent of her body and a heavy toll on their emotionally fragile and mentally deficient daughter. Each left deep scars on his psyche that his cosmetic skill as a surgeon cannot repair.

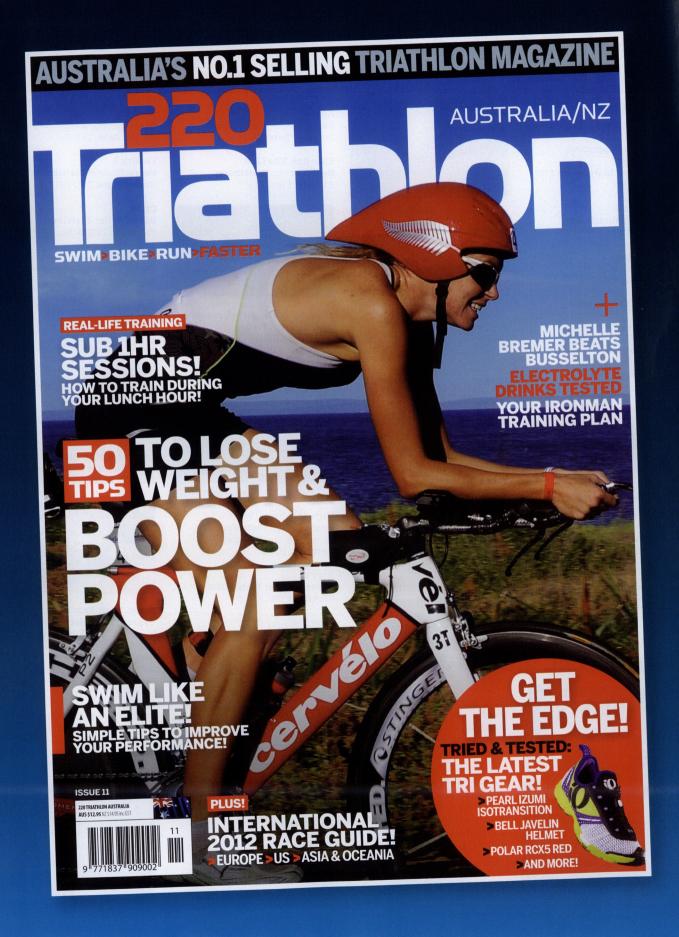
His test subject Vera (Anaya) becomes the object of his affection and obsession, but who exactly is she? Where did she come from and how exactly are the two linked together? The shocking conclusion and revelation of the exact nature of their relationship is confronting, questionable and will have you shaking your head in disbelief. This is unconventional and compelling viewing at its best and will stay with you long after the credits roll.



The Raid (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: GARETH EVANS STARRING: IKO UWAIS, YAYA RUHAIN, RAY SAHETAPY IN CINEMAS: MARCH 22, 2012

ou've got to give Welsh director Gareth Evans props. Bitten by the martial arts bug he might seem out of place writing/directing/ editing his second Indonesian based flick, but he is right at home with the brutal and blood-soaked in your face styled action rejuvenated in recent years by Ong Bak's Tony Jaa. The Raid's plot is simplicity itself. A squad of rookie SWAT members storm a high-rise tenement building looking to shut down the local crime lord's drug operation and take him into custody. Easier said than done. With 30 floors of criminals all vying for a piece of the action the mission descends into FUBAR territory fast. As his squad mates fall around him, lone wolf Rama (Uwais) uses his Silat fighting skills (focusing on strikes, throws and bladed weapons) to slice 'n dice his way through the cannon fodder leading to an epic final showdown with the big boss and his right-hand man.



ON SALE NOW!

Release Schedule

Release dates, pre-order deals, new information and much more

OUT NOW

Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City

Genre: Shooter Distributor: THQ Date: March 22

Ninia Gaiden 3

Genre: Action Distributor: THO Date: March 22

Asura's Wrath

Genre: Action Distributor: THQ Date: March 28

Silent Hill HD Collection

Genre: Shooter Distributor: THQ Date: March 28

Dragon's Dogma

Genre: Action Distributor: THQ Date: March 28

Catherine

Genre: RPG Distributor: QVS Date: March 28

Generator Rex: Agent of Providence

Genre: Action Distributor: Activision Date: March 28

APRIL 2012

Outdoors Unlimited

Genre: Action Distributor: AIE Date: April 1

Heavy Fire Afghanistan Genre: Shooter Distributor:

AIE Date: April 1

Genre: Flight Distributor: Mindscape Date: April 5

Deadliest Warrior Ancient

Genre: Fighting Distributor: Tuff Kat Entertainment Date: April 1

Genre: Flight Distributor: Tuff Kat Entertainment Date: TBC 2012

TBC

Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2

Genre: Shooter Distributor: OVS Date: TBC 2012

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: **Future Soldier**

Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBC 2012

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13

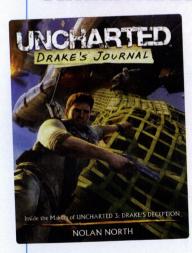
Genre: Sports Distributor: EA Date: TBC 2012

Tomb Raider Genre: Action-Adventure Distributor: Ubisoft

Date: TBC 2012

SWEET MERCH

Uncharted: Drake's Journal



Amazon.com \$24.95 dispatch date

Nolan North, the actor who portrays Drake, has written an exclusive, behind-the-scenes book that takes you along for the adventure. Step into the performance capture suit and watch the team create the cinematics that have vaulted Uncharted to the forefront of the video game industry. You'll also go inside the offices of Naughty Dog and meet the "Dogs" responsible for putting the finishing touches on the games you love.

Book features: Over 1,000 hi-resolution images, photos and stunning artwork fill the 128 pages. There are also QR codes linking to more than 50 exclusive video clips.

Genre: Action Distributor: Bockstar Date: TBC 2012

Spec Ops: The Line

Genre: Action Distributor: 2K Date: TBC 2012



Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance

Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape Date: TBC 2012

The Last Guardian

Genre: Adventure Distributor: Sony Date: TBC 2012



Hitman: Absolution

Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: TBC 2012

Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBA Date: TBC 2012

Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBA Date: TBC 2012

BioShock Infinite

Genre: Shooter Distributor: 2K

Date: TBC 2012



Darksiders 2

Genre: Action-Adventure Distributor: THQ Date: TBC 2012

Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time

Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony Date: TBC 2012

Metro: Last Light

Genre: Shooter Distributor: THQ Date: TBC 2012

Aliens: Colonial Marines

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sega Date: TBC 2012

Brothers in Arms Furious 4

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBC 2012

Far Crv 3

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBC 2012

Genre: Action Distributor: THO Date: TBC 2012

Dishonored Genre: Shooter Distributor: Bethesda/TBA Date: TBC 2012



Genre: Shooter Distributor: 2K Date: TBC 2012

Counter-Strike: Global Offensive

Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA/TBA Date: TBC 2012



Grand Theft Auto V

Genre: Action Distributor: Bockstar Date: TBC 2012

Anarchy Reigns

Genre: Action Distributor: Sega Date: TBC 2012

Rocksmith

Genre: Rhythm Distributor: Uhisoft Date: TBC 2012

South Park: The Game

Genre: RPG Distributor: THQ Date: TBC 2012



The Last of Us

Genre: Action Distributor: Sony Date: TBC 2012

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD

Genre: Sport Distributor: Activision Date: TBC 2012

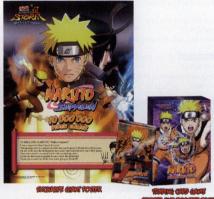
CARD EDITION

Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninia Storm Generations

Card Edition includes: a starter deck of Naruto card game cards (50 cards), a booster pack with an extra eight cards, and a poster with a message from Naruto creator Masashi Kishimoto. Cards contain codes that unlock artwork and extra mini-battles.

Estimated dispatch date: 29/03/2012







The Amazing Spider-Man Genre: Action Distributor:

Activision Date: TBC 2012 **Tekken Tag Tournament 2**

Genre: Fighting Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: TBC 2012

Transformers: Fall of Cybertron

Genre: Action Distributor: Activision Date: TBC 2012



Rainbow 6 Patriots Genre: Action Distributor: THO Date: TBC 2012

Ni no Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch

Genre: RPG Distributor: TRA Date: TBC 2012

Genre: TBA Distributor: THO Date: TBC

X-Com: Enemy Unknown Genre: Action Distributor: 2K Date: TBC 2012

Doom 4 Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBC Date: TBC 2012

Family Guy: Road to Death Genre: Action Distributor:

TBC Date: TBC

Resident Evil 6

Genre: Action Distributor: THQ Date: TBC 2012



Lollinon Chainsaw Genre: Action Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: TBC 2012

Backbreaker Vengeance

Genre: Sports Distributor: TBC Date: TBC 2012

Arcania: Gothic 4 Genre: RPG Distributor: TBC Date: TBC 2012

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony Date: TBC 2012

Devil's Third

Genre: Shooter Distributor: THO Date: TBC 2012

Overstrike

Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA Date: TBC 2012

Genre: Action Distributor: Activision Date: TBC 2012

Game of Thrones

Genre: Action Distributor: TBC Date: TBC 2012

Men in Black III

Genre: Action Distributor: Activision Date: TBC 2012

PS Vita Releases



PS VITA TBC 2012

LittleBigPlanet

Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony Date: TBC 2012

Genre: Action Distributor: Sonv Date: TBC 2012

Call of Duty

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Activision Date: TBC 2012

Assassin's Creed

Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TRC 2012

Bioshock

Genre: Shooter Distributor: 2K

Date: TBC 2012

Lego Batman 2 DC Superheroes Genre: Platformer Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: TBC 2012

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony

Date: TBC 2012

Final Fantasy X Genre: RPG Distributor: Square-

Enix Date: TBC 2012

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony Date: TBC 2012

Metal Gear Solid HD Collection Genre: Action Distributor: Konami

Date: TRC 2012

Zone of the Enders HD Collection

Genre: Action Distributor: Konami Date: TBC 2012

Mortal Kombat

Genre: Fighting Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: TBC 2012

Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee HD Genre: Platformer Distributor:

TBC Date: TBC 2012

Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBC

Date: TBC 2012

Rugby Challenge

Genre: Sports Distributor: TBC

Date: TBC 2012

Supremacy MMA: Unrestricted

Genre: Sports Distributor: TUFFKAT Date: TBC 2012

Time Travelers

Genre: TBC Distributor: TBC Date: TBC 2012



SWEET MERCH

Mass Effect Action Figures

Collect your four favourite Mass Effect characters in a single pack. complete with updated Mass Effect 3 branded packaging. These products contain a code that can be redeemed for bonus content for Mass Effect 3 multiplayer. The pack could include character boosters, weapons, weapon modifications and upgrades to make your multiplayer squad stronger. Visit social.bioware.com/redeem for instructions on how to unlock your new upgrades.

4-Pack includes: Garrus, Legion, Miranda and Mordin figures. Figures stand approximately 7" tall.

Biowarestore.com \$75 (USD) Estimated dispatch date: April/May 2012

ABOUT THE INDEX

Check out our handy index of all the PS3 titles we feel you should play (and some you shouldn't). Please note: scores are a reflection of a game's comparitive quality at the time of release and will not change - but the index may be updated as titles age or are superseded by new games.

ACTION

50 Cent: Blood on the Sand So dumb it's dangerously good. Better than

Captain America: Super Soldier NEXTLEVEL GAMES Beguilingly awful through and through.

Alien Breed 3: Descent Top-down twin-stick affair that doesn't do

enough to improve upon its predecessors. Army of Two: The 40th Day

EA MONTREAL Still bone-headed but a lot tighter and more fun than the original Army of Two.

UBISOFT MONTREAL One of the first 3D games. Dull, now

RECOMMENDED Bayonetta PLATINUM GAMES It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.

9

Physication RECOMMENDED Beyond Good & Evil HD UBISOFT Still one of the most charming games ever.

NEW Binary Domain YAKUZASTUDIO More than competent shooter with cool ideas and gunplay but embarrassing dialogue

Bionic Commando GRIN

The great moments are few and far between. RECOMMENDED

BloodRayne: Betraval WAYFORWARD

A classy and colourful heat-'em-up that rewards exploration.

RECOMMENDED Castle Crashers THEBEHEMOTH Violent but classy side-scrolling cartoon

RECOMMENDED Child of Eden QENTERTAINMENT

You need a Move controller to wring the best out of this weird and wonderful blaster.

The Club BIZARRE CREATIONS Original, compulsive and fun.

dull, dull combat.

RPG-action. Best played in co-op.

Damnation BLUE OMEGA ENTERTAINMENT Uninspired level design, broken gameplay.

AIRTIGHT GAMES Uninpiring graphics, lacklustre sound and

RECOMMENDED Dead Rising 2: Off The Record CAPCOM VANCOUVER A totally fresh update. If you missed it first

time around, grab it now Dead to Rights: Retribution VOLATILE GAMES Fine, but doesn't do enough to stand out. Needs more dog.

Devil May Cry 4 CAPCOM Memorable bosses but prepare to backtrack

Earth Defense Force: Insect Armageddon 5 VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE Ugly, repetitive and about 10 years out of date.



El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron

DEVELOPER: IGNITION TOKYO
DISTRIBUTOR: MINDSCAPE. PLAYERS: 1

"Probably the most breathtakingly beautiful and aesthetically inventive game on the PS3 so far. It flits between genres and will hook you into its deceptively deep combat system that demands creativity to fully master.

RECOMMENDED Final Fight: Double Impact 8 PROPERGAMES

Two games in one. Forget about Magic Sword and instead just dive into Final Fight.

8 XI senoige Lagalaga Galaga Legions DX NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS Bullet hell made pretty.

Genji: Days of the Blade GAME REPUBLIC Flashy graphics, giant enemy crabs, pisspoor plodding gameplay.

RECOMMENDED Ghosthusters: The Video Game TERMINAL REALITY / THREEWAVE SOFTWARE Robust, charming and impeccably presented.

Heavy Fire: Afghanistan

A technical travesty. Barely four hours long and full of brown. Multiplayer is DOA.

RECOMMENDED House of the Dead: Overkill Extended Cut

HEADSTRONG GAMES Has its tongue so far in its cheek it's almost poking out the other side. Requires Move.

Hunted: The Demon's Forge A textbook example of 'alright'. Co-op rules.

ESSENTIAL Just Cause 2

AVALANCHE STUDIOS

Parachutes, Grappling hooks, Stripper zeppelins. An insane action game. Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days

IOINTERACTIVE Michael Mann/YouTube visuals? Great. The game? Average.

Medieval Moves: Deadmund's Quest SAN DIEGO STUDIO/ ZIND AGI GAMES So-so shooty kids game with a few cool ideas that needs Move.

NeverDead REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS It isn't simply a bad game, but an intentionally bad game with a detestable protagonist.

Ninja Gaiden Sigma TEAM NINJA Violent but ace, despite its age.

8

кжемминия Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 TEAM NINJA A sexy and rock hard title but the gore's



Pac-Man Championship **Edition DX**

DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI **DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS**

"An evolutionary sequel that will put blisters on your eyeballs and thumbs. Hypnotically addictive and absolutely value packed, it's one of the best games you can buy on the PSN."

RECOMMENDED PixelJunk SideScroller Q-GAMES Old school fun meets new age design in a blaster that's very tricky.

RECOMMENDED Prototype 8 RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT A simple superhero kill-fest but a truckload

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One INSOMNIACGAMES Chaotic, confusing and a bit dull.

Red Faction: Armageddon VOLITION, INC. Brown, corridor-based action that will leave

you snoring. Get Guerrilla instead. RECOMMENDED Red Faction: Guerrilla VOLITION, INC.

The best destruction effects ever, hands down, with loads to see and do. RECOMMENDED Renegade Ops

AVALANCHE STUDIOS A sleek twin-stick shooter with split screen and furious competitive four player co-op.

Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken Superbly animated and smarter than you'd initially think. Punishing at times!

RECOMMENDED Saints Row 3

VOLITION, INC.

Big, brash and unapologetically dumb fun. 'Over the top' doesn't come close.

9

8

5

Scott Pilgrim vs. the World Distinctly old-school and charming but you

need three mates and a lot of patience. RECOMMENDED SOCOM: Special Forces

ZIPPER INTERACTIVE Great online with Move and a Sharp Shooter. though solo ain't that special.

Time Crisis: Razing Storm NAMCO BANDAI Simple, short light gun fare. Ignore the new first-person shooter mode, it's awful.

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2

A tense, realistic shooter. Cool gadgets Transformers: Dark of the Moon HIGH MOON STUDIOS

RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT

A near brainless movie tie-in with little merit.

Transformers: War for Cybertron HIGH MOON STUDIOS Good multiplayer, and that's about it

RECOMMENDED Vancuish

PLATINUM GAMES Whip quick third-person thrills. Play it now

Wanted: Weapons of Fate GRIN Designed only to appeal to mentallysubnormal 11-year-olds.

RECOMMENDED Warhawk INCOGNITO ENTERTAINMENT / SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO

Furiously addictive. Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night.

MSA Tonnes of grindhouse style, little substance. We doubt you'd bother with it now.

Wheelman MIDWAYSTUDIOS-NEWCASTLE/TIGONSTUDIOS Rubbish. Underdone throughout.

ACTION-ADVENTURE

3D Dot Game Heroes

FROM SOFTWARE
If you pine for the past you'll feel like this was made just for you

Alice: Madness Returns SPICY HORSE Marries great ideas with average platforming.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed

UBISOFT MONTREAL A landmark title that's dated now.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed II UBISOFT MONTREAL

When everything gels correctly it casually murders its predecessor

ESSENTIAL Assassin's Creed Brotherhood 10 UBISOFT MONTREAL

The pinnacle of the series so far and the multiplayer is outstanding.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed Revelations

UBISOFT MONTREAL A safe but solid title that feels more like a (really big) expansion than a true sequel.

RECOMMENDED Batman: Arkham Asylum 8 ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS Really delivers the goods, and even though the sequel's out you need this too.

Metacretin: radical hatred of the games you like



Ex: Human Revolution 3 Reviewer: gamejustice Score: 3

This game is horrid. Aside from the story there is no reason to buy or rent this lazily completed pile of rubbish. There really is no checkpoint system, instead there is a poorly implemented save/load system that you will struggle with during the whole game. You will feel like pulling your teeth many times throughout this game. Fanboys and crooked critics have jacked the score up for ulterior motives

King of the Mountain

There are only three games in the whole of this Index that feature the hallowed racetrack of Mount Fanorama. GRID has it, but it's a little old now, and you're racing cars that would only ever hit the track in some bizarro universe. SHIFT 2 also features it, and it's probably the best representation minus the V8 Supercars. The last one? ModNation Racers, We made the track ourselves, and you can find instructions way on how to do it yourself in issue #44.



Batman: Arkham City 10

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS
PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. PLAYERS: 1

"Everyone else needs to take note: this is how a superhero game should make you feel. It's endlessly creative, perfectly moody and technically flawless."

RECOMMENDED Brütal Legend

DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS

Must play. If God gave rock 'n roll to us then it's settled: Tim Schafer is God.

RECOMMENDED Castlevania:

Lords of Shadow
MERCURY STEAM
A truly solid romp with tasty combat.

RECOMMENDED Dante's Inferno

VISCERAL GAMES

Derivative but well-produced and good fun.

NECOMMENDED Darksiders
VIGIL GAMES

Teeth-grittingly testing but ultimately sound.

RECOMMENDED Dead Island

TECHLAND
Bogus script and occassionally ugly but
undeniably fun. Bound to be a cult hit.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space

9

Super tense. The future of survival horror.

REGOMMENDED Dead Space 2
VISCERAL GAMES
What it loses in isolation it makes up for in

storytelling. Still scary.

RECOMMISSION Enslaved

NINJA THEORY
A fun platforming romp based on the same classic story as TV's Monkey was.

Fairytale Fights
PLAYLOGIC GAME FACTORY
Quirky and sadistic but too simplistic.

Folklore 8
GAME REPUBLIC
Original and surprising with moments of genius.

The Godfather II **6**EA REDWOOD SHORES
Starts as a decent crime caper but allenates fans of the film. Play *Mafia II* instead.

10

ESSENTIAL God of War III
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO
A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking,

astonishing visuals.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection 9
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO/BLUEPOINT GAMES
Age has not dimished the impact of these

RECOMMENDED

PS2 titles. A must-get.

God of War Collection Volume II READY AT DAWN

Two of the best PSP games now on your PS3. Meticulously updated and pretty to look at.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto IV 10 ROCKSTAR NORTH

The technical scope and scale of *GTAIV* dwarfs all. Remarkable.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto: Episodes from Liberty City

Two new single-player campaigns, expanded multiplayer and a vast array of new weapons and vehicles. Explosive shotgun? Yes please.

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince 6
EA BRIGHT LIGHT STUDIO

Play the first 30 minutes and you've played the whole game.

Heavenly Sword NINJA THEORY Long in the tooth but still looks slick.

Hydrophobia: Prophecy DARK ENERGY DIGITAL Shoddy game, great water tech.

ENGOMMENDED IN FAMOUS
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
A superpowered take on the urban crimefighting sandbox. Get this and the sequel.

RECOMMENDED in FAMOUS 2
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
Bigger and better, and the level editor is solid.

LEGO Batman
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Faithful, but the formula is getting a bit old.

LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Thorough LEGO universe yet but a bit samey.

LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7
TRAVELLER'S TALES
As per above. You'd have to be a fan.

The Original Adventures

TRAVELLER'S TALES
Happiness and wonder overcame us with this ioyous adaptation.

LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean TRAVELLER'S TALES You should know from the title if you'd like this or not. It is what it is, and it's okay.

LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars TRAVELLER'S TALES Bum subject, excellent lightsaber action.

Lost: Via Domus

UBISOFT MONTREAL Some solid adventuring, but the voice acting is rubbish.

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom 7
GAME REPUBLIC

A feel-good romp that's a little old-fashioned. If you can find it cheap grab it for a rainy day.

EXECZECH
Its attention to detail, presentation and sound is to be admired.

ESSENTIAL Metal Gear Solid 4:
Guns of the Patriots 10
KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
Yes, it's as much a movie as it is a game but

the production values are insane. Epic.

RECOMMENDED Metal Gear Solid HD Collection
KONAMI
MGS2 has aged, Snake Eater is still all class and Peace Walker rocks.

Overlord II
TRIUMPH STUDIOS
Refined gameplay and more jokes but control quirks persist.

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Harks back to the original Prince.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future:

INSOMNIAC GAMES
Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction INSOMNIAC GAMES A big, wild, good ol' fashioned adventure. ATT

Red Dead Redemption 10

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR PLAYERS: 1-16
"A sweeping epic that's among the best games we've ever played and better than GTAIV in a lot of crucial areas. Also, the zombiethemed Undead Nightmare DLC is totally boss. Grab the Game of the

Resident Evil 4
CAPCOM

A straight port. You've played this already, but it's still great.

Year edition for max value.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 5 SCAPCOM

A grand, bloody adventure but the inventory system remains bad.

PANDEMIC STUDIOS
Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

Shadows of the Damned
GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE
Full of dick jokes and so-so gameplay from
two geniuses of design. Pity.

Silent Hill Homecoming
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES
New combat system is good, but lacks the cerebral chills.

6

NEW Silent Hill: Downpour VATRA GAMES True to the pants-browning original, but technical problems and stupid Al tarnish it.

Sonic the Hedgehog SONIC TEAM There are cheaper ways to get a spare Blu-ray case.

Sonic Unleashed
SONIC TEAM
3D adventuring that betrays the character.

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions
BEENOX
Looks great – but why have we gone back to

swinging from invisible hooks in the sky?

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II

LUCASARTS
Earns a point-and-a-bit for every hour that it is long. Technically superior but still rough.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's
Splinter Cell: Double Agent
UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Obsessive and gripping, online and off.



THE BEST PSone CLASSICS ON PlayStation. Store .



FINAL FANTASY VII DEVELOPER: SQUARE PLAYERS: 1

The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged, Final Fantasy VII is a modern classic and a worthy part of every credible videogame library.



DRIVER
DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS

INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1
The original Driver hit PlayStation
like a blast of fresh air. Hectic car
chases through 3D cities may oldhat now but when Driver debuted
it was like nothing we'd seen.



CRASHBANDICOOT 3: WARPED DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG PLAYERS: 1

The best platformer on any PlayStation. As far as old-school run and jump action in purposebuilt levels goes, *this* is the zenith.



SYPHON FILTER DEVELOPER: EIDETIC

If you still think Syphon Filter was a MGS rip-off you're misled. Play it again and tell us this awesome series doesn't deserve a PS3 comeback.



MEDIEVIL DEVELOPER: SCE STUDIO CAMBRIDGE PLAYERS: 1

CAMBRIDGE PLAYERS: 1 Speaking of games that deserve a PS3 comeback, where's Sir Dan? Fantasy hack 'n slash meets the supernatural, MediEvil still does it better than most since.



LOCATION: QUÉBEC CITY, QUÉBEC FOUNDED: 200 BEST KNOWN FOR: SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS

have started this studio with one goal: to conquer the world," says Dee Brown. Studio Head at Beenox. His determination began at a young age, professing to his mother at age 11 that one day he'd own his own studio. It took him only 10 years to reach that stage.

"As foolish (or cute) as it might have seemed at the time, I never changed my mind and just worked diligently toward that goal," continues Brown. His first step was to create his own corporation in High School - with his father as sole shareholder since he couldn't legally own shares - and then started working for a local videogame company that were coding for the first PlayStation. When that company moved to another city, Brown plunged himself into Beenox.

Cash flow problems led him to making the studio a conversion house to port existing games on additional platforms. It was a smart move, as Activision bought them out. That was roughly five years after founding the company, and at 26 years old Brown was leading an Activision studio.

"During our porting years, we were able to develop our own proprietary technology for consoles as well as game demos, which led Activision to give us our first shot at creating a full console game. Now I'm 33 and proudly working on Spider-Man titles!"

After a decade in production, Beenox currently employs about 200 people with another 100 dedicated to QA. Besides Brown, Pascal Brulotte - "the most talented artist I have ever met," says Brown – is the only original staff member still on board, and they've created their own game engine (Goliath). The studio has two development teams working in parallel. It's a strategic move that not only allows for multiple projects, but also to balance their resources. Plus, when it comes to the final push in a development cycle there's another team ready to draw upon in order to make the game shine.

On his success, Brown says "we have an extremely talented engineering team that is able to work on pretty much any platform out there. Our proprietary technology gives us an incredible flexibility in terms of the type of games we are able to create. It also allows our creative people to come up with the most insane ideas and actually go for it."

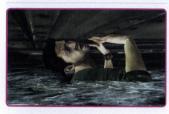
"[We] are committed to create outstanding products that will provide gamers with something unique. something they will remember. Every time we start a project, we shoot for the moon, which forces us to outperform ourselves, every time."

ESSENTIAL Uncharted: Drake's Fortune 10 NAUGHTYDOG

It's aged now, but still belongs on your shelf

ESSENTIAL Uncharted 2: Among Thieves 10

This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames



Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG PUBLISHER: SCEE PLAYERS: 1

"Impeccable in every regard. The action ramps up and up, taking you on foot-chases to teethgritting firefights and beyond to stunning set pieces. Totally complements and enhances the other games in the series."

RECOMMENDED Yakuza 4 One for the fans, but it's very refreshing.

ADVENTURE

The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn UBISOFT MONTPELLIER Well intententioned but dull. You'll get a kick out of co-op, however.

RECOMMENDED Back to the 8 Future: The Game Episode 1 TELLTALE GAMES

Fairly simple puzzles but, Great Scott, it looks and feels amazing.

RECOMMENDED Heavy Rain QUANTIC DREAM Not quite a revolution but very clever and very well-crafted.

Jurassic Park: The Game TELLTALE GAMES Rammed with QTEs and poorly made.

ESSENTIAL L.A. Noire TEAM BONDI Slow-paced, laboriously detailed and wellexecuted.

Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust TEAM17 SOFTWARE An amazing new low for this generation.

NCIS: The Game UBISOFT SHANGHAI

Nothing wrong with this formualic effort, but it's only for hardcore fans of the show.

Physical RECOMMENDED Stacking DOUBLEFINE

A truly unique concept and a real brain tickler.

FIGHTING

RECOMMENDED BlazBlue: Continuum Shift 9

ARC SYSTEM WORKS

10

8

10

1

5

Still wilder, wackier and noisier than anything else on PS3.

Deadliest Warrior: Ancient Combat 345 GAMES

Real people, ridiculous combat. Sun Tzu versus William Wallace? Sure!

Dragon Ball Z: Ultimate Tenkaichi Grand scale and scope but gets repetitive

The Fight: Lights Out

COLDWOOD INTERACTIVE The Move controls don't feel as organic as we'd hoped they would. Sorry Danny Trejo.

6

8

10

The King of Fighters XIII Better than XII but still crusty

RECOMMENDED Mortal Kombat

NETHERREALM Technically not available in Aus, it's a sterling

return to form for the series. Funny, too. RECOMMENDED Soulcalibur IV

NAMCOBANDAL The last hurrah for old-school characters. It could sit on your shelf next to its successor.

NAMCOBANDAI Great weapons-based combat built for online play, but single player is a bit thin.

NEW RECOMMENDED SoulCalibur V

Street Fighter III -Third Strike Online Edition IRON GALAXY Very different from IV and utterly brilliant.

ESSENTIAL Super Street Fighter IV

CAPCOM/DIMPS

Vibrant looking and superb online. Super Street Fighter IV Arcade Edition 8

For first time purchasers only, Also DLC RECOMMENDED Tekken 6

NAMCO BANDAI Biggest roster ever. Feels a bit old, though

Tekken Hyhrid NAMCO BANDAI PARTNER Tekken Tag Tournament HD is still loads of fun, and is the star of this package.

RECOMMENDED Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3

CAPCOM Blinding action with a roster you deserve, but still feels like it should've been DLC

WWE'12 YUKE'S MEDIA CREATIONS QTE-central with sloppy controls.

THE BEST **PSP** GAMES



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR LEEDS PLAYERS: 1-6

This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D *GTA*, just like the PS2 versions, on PSP Also? Phil Collins is in it. No, we're



MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE

Monster Hunter is a true system seller in its native Japan and it deserves that sort of awareness here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, rewarding you in spades if you're able to put the effort in. Even better with mates



WIPEOUT PULSE

a reason Wipeout just works – and this is proof. Depending on which day of the week you ask us this *just* pips the likes of *Burnout* Legends and Gran Turismo for best racing game on PSP.



METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER **DEVELOPER:** KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS **PLAYERS:** 1-6

A proper, well-produced and

thought-out *Metal Gear*; this is a must-have. The story's great and can't stress it enough: buy this game, and a PSP if you must. This a title that no gamer should miss.



GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN

PLAYERS: 1
Stupidly better than the already excellent *Chains of Olympus*, this still has fantastic graphics and tighter-than-Hades gameplay. If you're a fan of the series, this is a crucial part of the saga you really shouldn't miss.

ERTURE

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010

YUKE'S

If the soap-drama of the WWE's your thing, welcome to nirvana.

FLIGHT

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon PROJECT ACES

Reality-bending fare that lacks depth Air Conflicts: Secrets Wars

BITCOMPOSER Haphazard design, unforgivable mistakes and awful sound make this a true dud.

Apache: Air Assault GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT Hardcore chopper sim with impressive detail but lacks variety. Good online, though.

Heroes Over Europe TRANSMISSION GAMES
A little rough but not bad. *IL-2* is much better.



IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey
DEVELOPER: GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT

PUBLISHER: AFA PLAYERS: 1-16

"Head turning visuals, astonishing attention to detail, brilliant sound effects and stacks of ratta-tat action all combine in this truly surprisingly awesome aerial combat game. To be honest it's the best flight game we've ever played"

NEW Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters 5 TRICKSTARGAMES

Fifth-rate design and offers nothing new in any way.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2 8 UBISOFT ROMANIA

Way better mission design over the first title.

MUSIC

Fully exportable.

AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack HARMONIX Bare-hones stuff but the music is worth it

RECOMMENDED The Beatles: Rock Band 9

HARMONIX Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 2 9 FREESTYLEGAMES Some great improvements and excellent mixes.

песомминово Green Day: Rock Band HARMONIX

Very good. Up there with The Beatles: Rock Band and Guitar Hero: Metallica.

Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock 9 The last GH with a mostly decent soundtrack.

Guitar Hero World Tour NEVERSOFT Good, but missing crucial elements that make Rock Band better.

Guitar Hero 5 NEVERSOFT The last in the series with a dud hipster

tracklist. It was improving. RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica

NEVERSOFT The best in the series since Guitar Hero III.

Guitar Hero: Van Halen UNDERGROUND DEVELOPMENT
Only buy this cheap: \$90 is an insult. USA GH5 buyers got it as a free bonus.

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock NEVERSOFT

Functional, but it's missed the mark

RECOMMENDED Just Dance 3 UBISOFT PARIS
Songs for everybody in this silly but energetic dance title

LEGO Rock Band HARMONIX/TRAVELLER'S TALES Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like though.

ESSENTIAL Rock Band 2 10 HARMONIX The best music game series around.

RECOMMENDED Rock Band 3 9 HARMONIX Improvements to the interface abound, but it's only as good as your existing DLC library.

RECOMMENDED Bocksmith UBISOFT More an educational tool than game, but it works really, really well.

8 SCE LONDON STUDIO Will last as long as the PS3 with so much DLC.

PARTY

Ape Escape JAPAN STUDIO

10

A serious misstep. An on-rails shooter where the monkeys run towards you? Pass.

SCE LONDON STUDIO Harmless fun but pointless for adults.

Kung Fu Rider Waggle-tastic. A terrible Move game.

PlayStation Move Heroes NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE One for undemanding kids. Fun but bland.

The Shoot 6 COHORT STUDIOS A limited Move rail shooter. Cool presentation.

RECOMMENDED Sports Champions ZINDAGI GAMES Despite a few quirks this is a must-have

Move title. Start the Party! Save the World! SUPERMASSIVE GAMES

A Move game for the very young

Yoostar 2 BLITZ GAME STUDIOS Imperfect yet hilarious movie karaoke title.

5

PUZZLE/PLATFORMER

PayStation ESSENTIAL Braid HOTHEADGAMES Probably the best-ever example of how to

implement time-bending physics. RECOMMENDED Catherine 8 Niche, but addictive and challenging.

Physitation RECOMMENDED Chime ZÖE MODE A music-based puzzler where you need to slot in blocks to rockin' (and chilled) beats.

RECOMMENDED de Blob 2 9 BLUE TONGUE ENTERTAINMENT Surprisingly fun, fresh and colourful. Get it if you can: Blue Tongue no longer exist.

RECOMMENDED Flight Control FIREMINT One of the best Move games ever that'll eat your time if you succumb to it.

Happy Feet Two: The Videogame KMM GAMES A decent kid's movie tie-in. Better in co-op.

NEW RECOMMENDED Jak & Daxter Trilogy 9 SONY PS2 mascots prove they are evergreen

entertainment.

Aperture in your apartment

It exists, kind of. While it won't shoot dimension-bending wormholes this one-to-one scale replica of the gun from Portal will make any geek cave approximately 100 per cent cooler with its working lights. Toy company NECA have made this and a number of figurines based on characters in other Valve titles, as well as whole raft of statues from other games as well. All that's left is for you to make the sound effects.

Joe Danger HELLO GAMES

A platformer-puzzler with bundles of charm.

RECOMMENDED Katamari Forever NAMCO BANDAI Joyfullness, digitally realised.

RECOMMENDED LittleBigPlanet 2 9 MEDIA MOLECULE Like the original it's innovative and neverending. Improves upon an amazing product.

Outland Oxform RINGONER Contract Contra HOUSEMARQUE Liberally copies bits from old-school Castlevania but it does it well. Very clever

RECOMMENDED Plants vs. Zombies 9 POPCAPGAMES Insanely iconic and smart tower defense.

RECOMMENDED Rayman Origins 8 UBISOFT MONTPELLIER One of the most gorgeous games, ever.

RECOMMENDED The Sly Collection SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems.

RECOMMENDED Sonic 4: Episode 1 8 SONIC TEAM The second best Sonic game in about a decade but as a platformer it's so-so.

PlayStation Sonic CD SEGA Old-school Sonic stars in a beautiful port, but

the game is a pig to play. Cheap-as, though. SONICTEAM Starts out great and falters towards the end.

A stunning homage to everything Sonic. NEW & Physician RECOMMISNOSD Trine 2 8 FROZENBYTE Puzzles and platforming wrapped up with gorgeous three-player arcade action.

Worms: Crazy Golf Originally for smartphones, and it hasn't translated well. Fun in micro bursts

RACING/DRIVING

Blur 7 BIZARRE CREATIONS A race to power-ups rather than a racer with

RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise CRITERION GAMES Stunning and sharp but we miss the dedicated Crash Mode

Colin McRae: DiRT 2 CODEMASTERS Drives fine but it's style over substance here.

RECOMMENDED Daytona USA Addictive as ever and arcade perfect. RECOMMENDED DIRT 3

CODEMASTERS A welcome return to form. Great car roster, awesome handling, incredible sound.

RECOMMENDED Driver: San Francisco REFLECTIONS The series returns to its roots and delivers superb action-adventure racing. A must get. RECOMMENDED F1 2011

8

CODEMASTERS A tactical and graphical improvement over last year. Even better with a Logitech wheel.

ASOBO STUDIOS Huge, but bugged, boring and undercooked.



Gran Turismo 5

DIGITAL DEVELOPER: POLYPHIONY DIGITAL PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-16

GT5 feels familiar, and is still an RPG masquerading as a racing game. It looks stunning with class-leading lighting effects and exceptionally modelled premium cars, and with a G27 wheel it feels incredible. We just wish that there were some more recent cars."

RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers UNITED FRONT GAMES An incredible package. Creating is even more

MotoGP 10/11 MONIJMENTAL GAMES

Dull presentation and crap controls wreck it. MotorStorm: Pacific Rift

EVOLUTION STUDIOS Boasts splitscreen but visually it hasn't come on far enough.

MotorStorm Apocalypse EVOLUTION STUDIOS The new locale lacks a little charm but the racing is as fast and frantic as ever.

MX vs. ATV Alive 5 RAINBOW STUDIOS A step backwards for a series that peaked on PS2 and has gotten lamer since.

RECOMMENDED Need for Speed Hot Pursuit 9 CRITERION GAMES Smooth, compelling and absolutely beautiful

arcade racing.

Need For Speed The Run EABLACKBOX A sound concept that's tainted by cruddy handling. Get Hot Purusit instead.

Nail'd TECHLAND Fun knockabout ATV arcade racer.

RECOMMENDED SHIFT 2: Unleashed SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS Incredible sense of speed, frantic racing and plenty of depth. Features Mount Panorama.

RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID CODEMASTERS

A born-to-rage racing rebel. A bit old, but the only other racer to have Mount Panorama.

MILESTONE Fairly similar to the last one, but with a new Challenge mode and tweaked handling.

PayStation RECOMMENDED Skydrift DIGITAL REALITY

Kart racing meets Ace Combat. It's fairly short but thrilling.

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RECOMMENDED Split/Second

BLACK ROCK STUDIO Not as sharp as Burnout but it's a true challenger.

Test Drive Unlimited 2

EDEN GAMES

Massive and ambitious but the cars handle like go-karts in glue. Second-rate visuals, too.

RECOMMENDED WRC 2 MILESTONE

Better than last year's but still roughly put together. The only 'proper' rally title on PS3.

RPG/ACTION RPG

5 Alpha Protocol OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT Great concept, poor execution, Also? Worst male lead ever

Ar tonelico Qoga: Knell of Ar Ciel

Defiantly old-school JRPG. One for the fans.

Anystation The Baconing HOTHEAD GAMES

Butchered co-op and crushing difficulty spikes sour the experince.

RECOMMENDED Disgaea 4: A Promise Unforgotten NIPPON ICHI SOFTWARE Very familiar for fans but still exciting.

7 DC Universe Online SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT Pretty but shallow. It's now free to play online.

RECOMMENDED Dark Souls FROM SOFTWARE Brutally, stupidly, gloriously hard.

Dungeon Siege III **OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT** Sluggish combat and an arse-backwards

upgrade system. Quite pretty, though, RECOMMENDED Dragon Age: Origins

As long as it is enthralling. Essential for patient fantasy freaks.

пэсоммэноэр Dragon Age II BIOWARE

Accessible but lacks immersion. One step forward and two steps back from Origins

ESSENTIAL The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion 10 BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS Simply put: awesome.



The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

DEVELOPER: BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS DISTRIBUTOR: PLAYERS: 1

"Book holidays, leave your other half and ask someone to take care of your dog; you will need 300+ hours to discover everything this offers, from the varied combat options to the mind-blowing amount of quests. The world is huge. It demands your attention. Give in to it absolutely."

ESSENTIAL Fallout 3 10 BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS It's Oblivion in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, and it's utterly brilliant.

RECOMMENDED Fallout: New Vegas OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT A great ride but you've been on it before. Back to the, er, present

We're rapidly approaching our deadline of 2015 for hover cars, and so far we're still using rubber and conventional wheels to propel automobiles. Pathetic. Solution? Sadly, we're going to be earthbound for a little while longer, as the best hope we have is electromagnets. Experiments on mice have made them hover by manipulating the water in their body. The catch? The magnet is 6.6cm wide and a mouse weighs 10 grams. An equivalent human of 75kg would need a magnet 495m wide.

Final Fantasy XIII SOLIABEENIX Spellbinding graphics and 50+ hours of action

but missing a little magic.

NEW RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII-2 8 SQUAREENIX

Better, with improved combat and more freedom but still clunky in places.

Hyperdimension Neptunia IDEA FACTORY

A pastiche on modern videogames. Very, very weird JRPG with neat attack strategies.

NEW RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII-2 8 SQUAREENIX

Better, with improved combat and less restrictive than FFXIII but still clunky in places.

NEW RECOMMENDED Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning 38 STUDIOS/BIG HUGE GAMES

Great arcadey combat and offers tonnes of freedom. A patchwork of everything great.

The Lord of the Rings: SNOWBLIND STUDIOS Satifying but repetitive combat. Best with two Rings fans going at it in three-player co-op.

ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 2 10 BIOWARE Astonishingly rich combat-driven sci-fi. An action RPG without peer.

Valkyria Chronicles Strategy/RPG heads should not miss this.

SHOOTER

RECOMMENDED Aliens vs. Predator REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS One of the best movie-inspired titles ever

RECOMMENDED Battlefield 3

DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE Single player blows, multiplayer's awesome Get a team together and own the PSN.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 8 DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE Better single player campaign that its seguel.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2 8

DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE A top-tier shooter with a deeply dedicated online community, but the single-player mischief of the original is M.I.A.

RECOMMENDED BioShock

IRRATIONAL GAMES / 2K MARIN Grown-up gaming at its best. One of the most absorbing stories ever.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 2

2KMARIN/DIGITALEXTREMES/2KAUSTRALIA Doesn't match the original's plot but the combat has been spliced to near-perfection.

Bodycount CODEMASTERS Fundamentally broken and largely pointless.

ESSENTIAL Borderlands GEARBOX SOFTWARE This starts out great and only gets better.

SPLASHDAMAGE Runs a good online race. Faceplants as a solo experience.

RECOMMENDED Brother's in Arms:

Hell's Highway 8 GEARBOX SOFTWARE The most authentic WWII shooter ever made.

PEOPLE CAN FLY

Q

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Inventive but saves the best stuff for the final couple of hours. Graphically struggles, too.

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare 10 INFINITY WARD It's still relentlessly exciting.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 10 INFINITY WARD

Like three games stuffed into one. We still love the co-op Spec Ops mode.

RECOMMENDED Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 INFINITY WARD

It realised the threat presented by Battlefield 3 and sees it off. Refined and addictive.

RECOMMENDED Call of Duty: Black Ops TREYARCH

A generous package with great solo and online play. The presentation's excellent too.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: World at War 10 TREYARCH War at its worst (and best). Proof you can make a great WWII game set (partially) in the

Pacific. Plus, Nazi Zombies. Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood 7

TECHLAND A cinematic and action-packed Western shooter that's better than you probably think.

Call of Juarez: The Cartel TECHLAND Hackneyed ideas with AI from the last century. Dopey multiplayer, too.

RECOMMENDED The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena STARBREEZE STUDIOS / TIGON STUDIOS

Moody and fresh. A must play. You don't need to know the movies to enjoy it either.

Condemned 2: Bloodshot MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS

Gripping stuff. We were blown away. Shame the original isn't on PS3.

Paytration RECOMMENDED CIVSIS CRYTEK

Forget it's from 2007 and realise it's stellar. Comes close to shaming the sequel.

RECOMMENDED Crysis 2 CRYTEK Diabolically pretty and challenging, and a welcome reprieve from corridor shooters.

RECOMMENDED The Darkness STARBREEZE STUDIOS Stunning, original and gory as hell. Shame the sequel doesn't rock quite as hard.

NEW RECOMMENDED The Darkness II DIGITAL EXTREMES Goes back to the series' comic-book roots. Gory, inventive, and fun, but pretty short.

RECOMMENDED Deus Ex: Human Revolution EIDOS MONTREAL

A flawed masterpiece that doesn't offer quite as much choice as you'd like.

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MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS / DAY 1 STUDIOS A chilling ride, but a bit ugly now.

FEAR 2: Project Origin MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS

An above-average shooter suffering from a lack of imagination.

F.E.A.R. 3 DAY 1 STUDIOS Capable but unspectacular, Also, not scary, Better in co-op.

RECOMMENDED Far Cry 2 8 UBISOFT MONTREAL A technical open-world bell-ringer but the travel time will grate.

RECOMMENDED GoldenEye 007: Reloaded 8 EUROCOM

A lot of fun, though it's probably lost amongst the glut of other top-tier games.

Haze FREE RADICAL DESIGN

Patchy visuals, tragic level design and dismal Al. Homefront

Polished but blink-and-you'll-miss-it single player. A fine alternative to CoD multi, though,

KAOSSTUDIOS

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ESSENTIAL Killzone 2 10 GUERRILLA GAMES Lives up to the hype with hectic action.

RECOMMENDED Killzone 3 9 **GUERRILLA GAMES**

RECOMMENDED Medal of Honor 8 DANGER CLOSE / DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE Not sexy but it's a gritty, realistic shooter with great atmosphere.

Epic firefights and an engrossing storyline

насоммиямово Mirror's Edge 8 EA DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE A true original that makes some grand leaps in design.

Stranger's Wrath 8

JUST ADD WATER A fun mish-mash of platforming and shooting. RECOMMENDED Operation Flashpoint:

Red River CODEMASTERS A massive improvement on its predecessor. Fun solo, but co-op over the PSN is awesome.

RECOMMENDED The Orange Box EAUK/VALVE

Get it for Portal, keep it for Half-Life 2. RECOMMENDED Portal 2 One of the most brilliant games, ever,

9

RAGE

Holds promise but the world feels empty RECOMMENDED Resistance 2 INSOMNIAC GAMES

Fast, furious and stuffed with action.

RECOMMENDED Resistance 3 INSOMNIAC GAMES Derivative action but effortlessly compelling.

A grand finale, nonetheless. **Roque Warrior**

ZOMBIE STUDIOS/REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS A fiasco. We tried to like it but it's too short and too terrible.

Singularity RAVENSOFTWARE Had potential but wasn't quite worth the wait.

Sniper: Ghost Warrior 5 CITYINTERACTIVE The novelty will be enough for sniper fans.

Everyone else should wait for the sequel. TimeShift

SABERINTERACTIVE A sterling attempt that doesn't quite reach 88

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 2 UBISOFT MONTREAL Not as good or as cool as the first one

Turning Point: Fall of Liberty SPARK UNLIMITED Great concept, bogus execution.

SPORTS

AFT. Live BIGANT

Does a decent job of things and it's better than Rugby League Live.

Backbreaker

NATURALMOTION Great tech. Worth a look to see euphoria at work in a sports game.

EA TIBIIRON

Great controls but struggles to be convincing.



FIFA 12

DEVELOPER: EA CANADA PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-22

"Hardcore fans will love it, though those approaching the series with relatively fresh eyes will scratch their heads. Online, though, it's without peer: you could lose your life to this belter of a game until next year's update."

RECOMMENDED Fight Night Champion EACANADA

Refined controls, excellent story mode and super-quick gameplay. Near perfect.

NEW Grand Slam Tennis 2

EACANADA Great animation but the new control system feels a little off.

International Cricket 2010 TRICKSTAR GAMES

Not the most comprehensive cricket game but the best when you're on the pitch.

COLDWOOD INTERACTIVE

Suprisingly effective fitness software for those with Move sets.

RECOMMENDED NBA 2K12

VISUAL CONCEPTS Fans of the sport should buy this immediately.

RECOMMENDED NBA Jam: On Fire Edition EACANADA

Loads of fun. For \$20 you're mad not to get it

RECOMMENDED Pro Evolution Soccer 20128 KCETTOKYO

Hi-octane action (yes, for a football game).

It's actually a lot of fun, but it's no FIFA.

PUMA After Hours Athletes VARIOUS DEVELOPERS

Three games in one – bowling, darts and pool – that you've downloaded before.

Rugby League Live BIGANT

Not as complete a game as the last one on PS2 and the whack team ratings frustrate.

Rugby World Cup 2011 HBSTUDIOS

Near disastrous and fairly pointless.

Shaun White Skateboarding UBISOFT MONTREAL Kudos for the quirky touches but the skating

itself is pretty bland.

Shaun White Snowboarding UBISOFT MONTREAL Lacks the fine touch of realism or the

excitement of lunacy. RECOMMENDED Skate 2

EABLACK BOX

One of the greatest sports games ever conceived. Flawless controls are married with a dense city that's packed with natural lines.

RECOMMENDED Skate 3

EA BLACK BOX Better in many ways, although the city isn't as cool as Skate 2.

RECOMMENDED Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12 8

EA TIBLIBON

Great golf game but we don't like the way the day one DLC is teased via the career mode.

Tony Hawk's Project 8

NEVERSOFT No real reason to revisit this post-Skate at all.

Tony Hawk: RIDE ROBOMODO

Pure frustration made plastic. It really is as awful as we, and everyone else, say it is

пэсоммізмово Top Spin 4

2K CZECH

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More accessible than its predecessor with a DualShock, as the Move controls are spotty.

NEW RECOMMENDED UFC Undisputed 3

YUKE'S MEDIA CREATIONS The truest expression of digital combat. If you 'get' the sport you need this

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RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 4

SUMO DIGITAL Superb Move controls and supremely pretty Still has woeful music.

Winter Stars

Capable but uninspiring Move-enabled sports mini games

STRATEGY

RECOMMENDED Civilization Revolution

FIRAXIS GAMES
Great fun and shockingly addictive.

RECOMMENDED From Dust

UBISOFT MONTPELLIER Creative and engaging god-game. Surprisngly likeable

RECOMMENDED R.U.S.E.

EUGEN SYSTEMS Niche but supremely well-crafted strategy.

Better with Move, too.

Stormrise THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

A cack-handed, future war mess.

PS VITA

NEW Army Corps of Hell

Repetitive action-strategy title that doesn't utilise the Vita's capabilities.

NEW RECOMMENDED Everybody's Golf

CLAPHANZ

Puke-inducing cuteness wrapped around excellent physics. You won't be disappointed.

NEW Little Deviants

BIGBIG STUDIOS A whole bunch of middling mini-games Youngsters might dig it.

NEW Modnation Racers: Road Trip

SONY SAN DIEGO So much to do and create in this wellweighted racer, but no online multi sucks.

NEW Reality Fighters

NOVARAMA Cool idea and the Augmented Reality works well, but the biffo is simplistic.

NEW RECOMMENDED Uncharted:

Golden Abyss

Fully featured action game that takes a dump on naysayers. Worth buying a Vita for.

NEW RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 4:

World Tour

6

SEGA It's the PS3 game but on Vita, which is really guite good. Only worth buying once, though.

NEW RECOMMENDED WipEout 2048

STUDIO LIVERPOOL

Robust racer with the heritage of the games before it and very pretty in parts. Stupidlylong loading times break the flow, however.

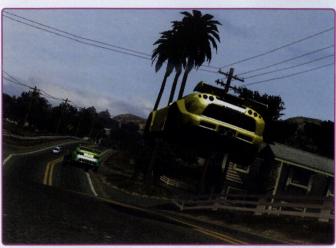
infamous

REVISITING PLAYSTATION CLASSICS

2002: JRNOUT 2

CONSOLE: PS2 GENRE: BACING DEVELOPER: CRITERION COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: ENGLAND CURRENT PRICE: \$10 (ERAY)





magine your favourite racing game in the entire world. Now. imagine that same game, but with a bonus dosage of acid injected straight into your eyeballs. It might sound like an extreme analogy. but that is exactly how it felt seeing Criterion Games' Burnout 2: Point of Impact for the first time back in 2002. It was brutally bright and brash.

While the original Burnout was the little racer that could, Point of Impact was where Criterion really found their groove; not only dethroning the Need for Speed series in one effortless swoop, but presenting gamers with the new pinnacle in high-octane, arcade racing. Yes, this is where Criterion stepped up and started playing with the big boys.

Burnout 2 didn't embrace the aggressive nature of its sequels, but that allowed this PS2 thrill-ride to focus on both rock solid racing and incredible speed instead. Races quite often started off calm; but it was naive to expect them to stay that way for long.

By the second lap, both difficulty and intensity would ratchet up, forcing racers to fight the competitors for mere milliseconds. simultaneously testing confidence and finding out just how well the punchy beasts could be flung around the tracks. Did you have the balls to steer yourself into waves of oncoming traffic in order to secure first place, or would you choke under the pressure and slam, headfirst, into a concrete divider? It was this utter intensity that quickly came to define

the series, making gamers across the globe sweat with trepidation. It was a rush hitting the boost and watching the screen peel back.

Where Burnout 2 really shined though, was with its crashes. To say that these moments of ultimate destruction were amazingly unparalleled is an understatement. Criterion strengthened their graphics engine and provided a degree of vehicular damage that was second to none, crippling, ripping and launching beloved automobiles into the air with ease. It was all backed up by a kick- arse soundtrack and beautifully smooth visuals that were an absolute joy to watch as environments whizzed right past you.

The amplification of these elements was 'Crash Mode'; the now famous mini-game school boys could have only ever dreamt of. Crash's key concept was simple - boost your car towards streams of traffic and cause as much spectacular carnage humanly possible, all in the aim to obtain the largest bragging rights. Oh, and the highest damage cost as well. This single mode continued to garner so much love from Burnout fans, that it led Criterion to create and release a downloadable spin off title just last year; albeit with a less traditional, top down approach.

Sure the Burnout series may have evolved into a more Takedown orientated or open-world styled direction, but Burnout 2: Point of Impact still remains one of the finest examples of arcade racing available on consoles. If it's pure, unadulterated, heart pumping arcade racing you're pining for, this is one speedster still worth taking for a spin. Adam Guetti

AND THUS BEGAT AUTOLOG

With Criterion Games putting the boot into the Need for Speed franchise, EA saw no better team to be the ones to reboot it. Thus, the incredible Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit was born. Hot Pursuit also led to the creation of Autolog - a devilishly persistent leader board that fostered competiveness and killed relationships. Thanks Criterion. We used to have friends.



Aliens: Colonial Marines

We've been tracking them for years on our motion-tracker. Now Sega says they're ready to pounce...

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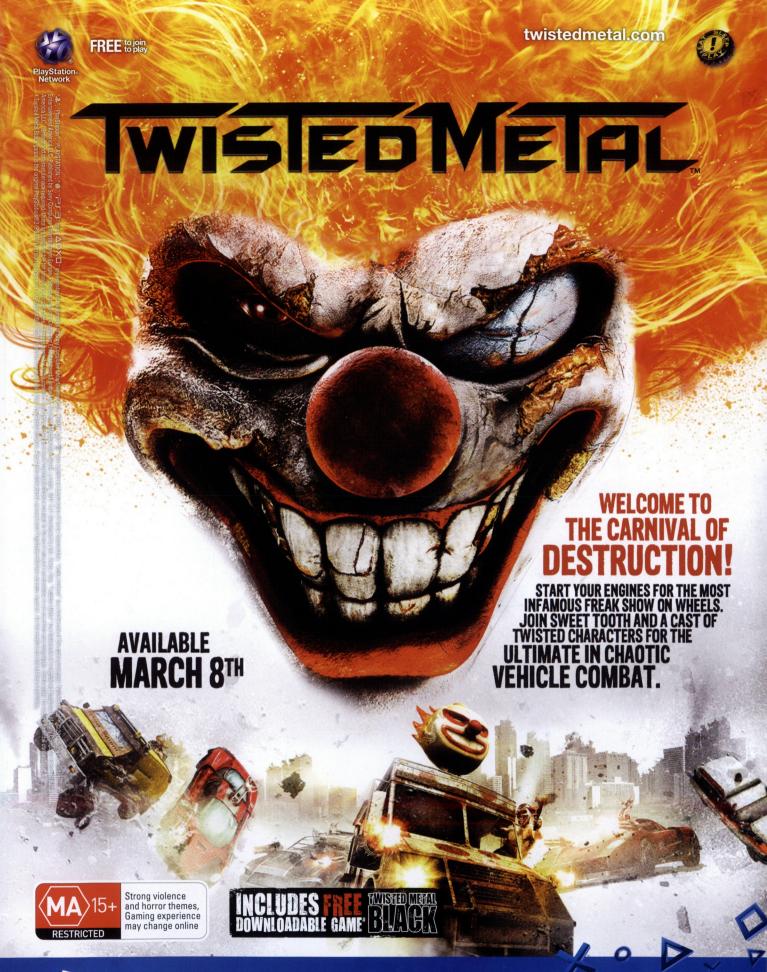
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THE GENERATIONS CLASH ON 29TH MARCH 2012



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Mild violence

XBOX 360.

PG